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THE

MASTER'S HOUSE.

THE

MASTER'S HOUSE;

A

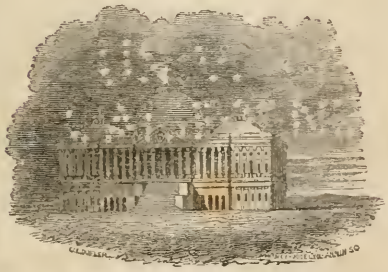
TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

Thorpe, T B

BY

LOGAN;

"I WAS ALWAYS THE FRIEND OF THE WHITE MAN."



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PREFACE.

EVENTS of every-day life are constantly occurring, which, if recorded, would make more thrilling histories than many of the volumes which aspire to have no other character than that of romantic interest, produced at the sacrifice, if needs be, of every other quality.

In the present volume, a truthful story of Southern life has been conscientiously recorded,—one not unusual in the country of its location, yet most deeply interesting, for the many morals its details naturally suggest.

It is the privilege and the duty of the living and responsible actors upon the stage of life to learn from the experience of the past, and make inferences of what may naturally occur in the future.

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If any thing be set down in the pages that follow this imperfect preface which creates surprise in the reader,—developes an unexpected phase in society, —or exhibits an heretofore unfamiliar sentiment,— the question that arises, can these things be true ? should be seriously thought over ; and then should come the inquiry, what are the extraordinary causes that produce them in the organization of society ?

What may be the effect of the "Master's House" upon the reader, the author cannot anticipate ; his own understanding of the purposes intended is clear, and if he has failed, it has been from a determination on his part to soften his pictures, rather than to give them in their true, but not unexaggerated colors.

It would sometimes seem as if the influence of Christianity was fading from the world, or that its ministers had lost their influence, when its plainest precepts can be violated, without rousing a spirit of condemnation, which, if impotent to entirely prevent, might at least protest against the disregard of the plainest precepts of the moral law.

This volume is dedicated to the lovers of mankind,—to those who desire the highest development,

and would, by having the evils of society exposed, learn where to commence the necessary reform. There are defects in our social and political systems that are working evils, which, if not checked, and finally eradicated, must accomplish universal ruin. The remedies, if of the right kind, are neither instant in their operation, nor revolutionary in their character ; the first advancement, is the admission that reform is needed, and then the manner of its accomplishment will readily suggest itself.

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THE MASTER'S HOUSE;

A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

MALDEN AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

THERE is not a more charming town in New England, than Malden, so celebrated, and so widely known for its intelligent population, its interesting traditions, and its most excellent seat of learning.

Until recently, Malden retained quite a rural appearance, and presented a charming mixture of tasteful cottages, ornamented with choice shrubbery, and a few grand old mansions, half hidden away among elms more than a century old.

The students who find a temporary home at Malden, bear patiently with many imaginary grievances of college life, rather than abandon its beautiful streets, its picturesque highways and hospitable inhabitants.

Near the centre of one of the principal thoroughfares is an old, yet noble looking house, which attracts attention

from the most superficial observer. It seems to stand out from among the more pretentious residences by which it is surrounded, as would John Hancock in his rich but quaint costume, if suddenly thrust into a group of modern gentlemen.

There is a width of front, and massiveness of stonework about this grand old house, a ludicrous largeness about the knocker, and a mysterious symbolization about the coat of arms wrought among the mouldings over the door-way, that tells a tale of men and sentiments which have for ever passed away, yet there is left behind a mark, well calculated to command profound respect.

The inhabitants of this old mansion were descendants of a family whose members were famous among our Puritan fathers, yet there was little left to them but the traditional greatness of the past. They retained of a once splendid fortune, a simple competency, but with decreasing wealth came increasing pride. They lived almost in the seclusion of ascetics, and, complacent themselves, they had apparently no desire to conciliate the good will of the less pretentious people about them, and thereby were almost forgotten, or unobserved by the inhabitants of Malden.

On summer days they could be seen moving to church with a stately manner, that shed a kind of chilling influence about them, and having arrived at the "house of prayer," they took their seats "for worship," with a grim smile of satisfaction, which would have done honor to the sternest spirits of the "Protectorate."

Upon week days they were rarely seen in the streets, and then guarded from intimacy by a careful attention to

dress, which seemed to render them incapable of performing a hearty salutation, or indulging a genial smile, without deranging a personal appearance of so much importance to be preserved, that it must be done, even at the sacrifice of the symbolic language of courtesy and friendship.

The "unsociability of the Hastings family," as hinted, made little impression upon the town; it was kept before the inhabitants more by the noble looking old mansion, than by any thing else, and perhaps it would not have been observed at all, but for the fact, that Annie Hastings, the only young person in this family, had, imperceptibly to her staid guardians and to the community, grown into an attractive, laughing, hearty girl; but as she made acquaintances with her schoolmates of her own age, and was beloved by all whom she met, she shed over the previous dreary associations of her household, a genial sunshine, so natural to youth, and so contagious in spite of one's self.

Annie, although naturally of an enthusiastic temperament, had, insensibly to herself, adopted a quiet manner, the natural result of the education she had received, and the examples set before her; yet she was a great favorite with the few students who were occasionally indebted to the inmates of the Hastings House for a kind of formal hospitality, given more because having company was a traditionary peculiarity, than a present necessity. She was also an object of interest, because it was thought by many a visionary youth, that Annie must be very miserable, immured, as they imagined, a sort of prisoner, among the solemn people within the heavy walls of the "old Hastings House."

Among all the students of Malden, Graham Mildmay was the only one who maintained the position of a constant visitor at the home of Annie Hastings. He was a "Southern student," known to be the heir of a large estate, possessed a tall and manly personal appearance, pleasing manners, and what is not uncommon to youth from his section of country, but yet not characteristic, was of rather a serious temperament.

It might be supposed that the constant visits of a generous hearted and noble looking young stranger, would have created a sentiment in Annie's heart that would soon ripen into love; but Graham Mildmay was so courteous, so deferential in manner, that the fact of his being the most distinguished student of his college, gratified Annie's pride, called into action her intellectual faculties, but excited no deeper emotions.

But this was not all. Annie Hastings was still very young, and she was so educated to look upon herself; she also had that proper appreciation of her own merits and position, that she never thought admirers would be difficult to obtain. But there was a difference of sentiment existing between Mildmay and herself, that had been the subject of a thousand conversations, and yet had never been reconciled, and this disagreement involved a high principle, that was in Annie's feelings only to be overcome by an intensity of love, still foreign to her heart.

Mildmay was cordially accepted among the young men of the college from his section of the Union, as "one of their own set," yet he never entered heartily into their dissipations, or became seriously involved in any way, with

their reckless amusements. He was popular with all who knew him for his manliness, and seemed to happily combine industrious habits with the cultivated manners and easy bearing, so peculiar to the youth of the South. There was a sense of innate worth, and pecuniary ability about Mildmay, that so frequently distinguishes the highly educated planter from the mere business man, which, joined with his acknowledged moral worth, made him a universal favorite. His manners atoned for many thoughtless breaches of discipline, on the part of his fellow Southerners, and he was every where spoken of, as one destined to a high position in the councils of his country, and assigned a leading place as a future statesman of the South.

With two or three of his intimate friends, Mildmay sauntered down the principal street of Malden; he was in fine spirits, for he had carried off the "honors of his class," and as "*valedictorian*," was the hero of the hour.

No one felt envious that he wore the scholastic crown. Through four long years of study he had been uniformly at the head of his classes, had never maliciously broken a college rule, had originated no difficulty with his fellow students, had always been generous to prodigality; and all the while, seemingly, the least ambitious student in the institution.

The group of young gentlemen as they pursued their way, as if attracted by some magnetic influence, passed the old and aristocratic mansion of the Hastings family. Annie was only partially visible at the window, for an ambitious vine covered with gay flowers, crept luxuriantly over the casement, concealing a full view of her fair face, while

her hand, on which she leaned, was involved in her flaxen curls. Somewhat to her own astonishment, she was sad, and felt it was because she was thinking of the change that would take place in her circumscribed world, by the breaking up of the Senior Class of the Halls of Malden.

"I see," said Singleton Minor, looking archly at Mildmay, "that you have brought us on a pilgrimage to your own shrine, and will give us a chance at a respectful distance, to worship my lady of a thousand graces."

"Very natural indeed," quoth Reynolds Calhoun. "Graham wishes us to see how pretty northern sentiments can be done up in angelic forms. I think my faith would be staggered, if pretty Annie Hastings would condescend to give me a lecture on the enormous sin of our 'peculiar institutions.'"

"And a poor preacher indeed would she be," said Adolph Marigny, heartily laughing, "for she would carry into slavery an honest Christian youth of our own land, and one nearly as fair as herself. I think," continued Marigny, seemingly very earnest indeed, "I think universal emancipation must prevail, unless we can make out a special case in favor of a particular individual;" and the gay Louisianian looked knowingly at the victim of all this badinage.

At this instant Annie looked up, and she was greeted by respectful salutations, that would have been gracefully conspicuous at the tournaments of old.

"I think," said Mildmay, as the party passed on, "that you are all quite merry with your tongues, but I see that you are also very envious in your hearts, as you have cause to be."

"We are envious of course," said Marigny, "for we have made our calculations, what a cozy time you will have of it, with that fine old yellow brick mansion, shining out from among the magnolias; it will be quite refreshing in a new country to see a little heraldry, with the legitimate excuse, that you inherited it, for I doubt if Miss Hastings would ever leave Malden, unless she could take the old house away with her."

"You will of course improve it with a wine-cellar and a billiard-room," suggested Calhoun; "for these are things that would in this Jericho pull down the walls: but I think," he continued, "that they would stand unharmed, by such necessary associations, amid the free airs of the Mississippi valley."

"And, besides, we might have expected this," said Singleton Minor; "for you remember, boys, how very eloquent Mildmay got, in the Society rooms, about the Goths coming down upon the fair fields of Italy! He seems to have a taste for these incursions into foreign lands. If I could afford to sacrifice my inclinations to patriotism, I do not know but that some of these fair descendants of the 'roundheads' might capture the last of a race of cavaliers. I must confess I have had my traditional prejudices terribly shaken."

"The way was prepared for this somewhat," said Calhoun, turning to Singleton, "by your romantic affection for the daughter of either old General Fairfax, or Oliver Cromwell,—I forget which; you can turn to Carlyle at your leisure, and learn the particulars."

"And if you will leave the unintelligible author you

have named, and read more English history," continued Calhoun, "you will find that this same staid daughter of Fairfax was, in time, the wildest duchess at the gay court of the dissipated Charles; and this fact is what redeems this puritanical human nature. The women are always more intelligent, more facile, and more patriotic than the men."

"Gentlemen!" said Mildmay finally, with some feeling; "your jests have the merit of wit, and perhaps of compliment; yet they trench somewhat on personal ground, because suggested by, though not necessarily alluding to, a particular lady. I am sorry, however, to perceive," he continued, "that in spite of your long residence here, you still make mental distinctions between the people of this great republic. I am for myself determined to know nothing of the kind, and, above all, will I never allow prejudices to control me, which originated with the British nation centuries before we were born."

"Patriotism is not wholly dead, in spite of what disappointed politicians say," said Marigny, looking with real admiration at Mildmay; "but it is after all," he continued, "the beautiful and good girls of this same sterile New England, who make us feel our homes are the same, whether North or South, and I say, may Heaven bless them all!"

"Treason is rife,—the South is in danger,—the Amazons of the North conquer,—they rush upon our defenceless cohorts, and capture husbands with a precision that finds but a dim parallel in the red man lariating the wild horse on the prairie," returned Calhoun, at the same time

taking the arm of Minor, and gracefully bowing, he turned into an obscure street, leaving Marigny and Mildmay together.

Mildmay was annoyed; there was something in the half-concealed sneers of the reckless Calhoun, that caused a dark cloud to pass over his face: his companion noticed it, and with some concern inquired,

"Has any thing happened to offend you?"

"Nothing," said Mildmay, "that is personal to myself; yet, nevertheless, I feel the deepest chagrin and mortification that Calhoun, gifted as he is, represents so many of our Southern youth; possessed of abilities beyond the ordinary standard of young men, he has passed through his college course without finding it necessary to ever seriously arouse from his natural indolence. He will when he goes home give no useful tone to his community. He sees all the salient points of these New Englanders, and remembers for a contrast, all the superficially magnificent qualities of his native State; but there ends his philosophy."

CHAPTER II.

COLLEGE EXERCISES.

At an early hour of the morning, the usually quiet town of Malden presented a scene of interesting excitement. Carriages and foot-passengers lined the highways, all moving towards one common centre. It was "Commencement Day."

The citizens generally suspended business, that they might do honor to the celebration. Among the throng appeared grave and reverend gentlemen, who displayed a singular knowledge of the streets and college buildings, but were strangers to the citizens—these were "the boys of former years:" their greetings with each other were cordial, and sometimes of painful interest; then there were a younger and more vigorous race, who had still many associations not destroyed by time, who still knew all the old shopkeepers, and many of the permanent residents of Malden: these were members of classes of quite recent times. Then there were juveniles, who had just entered upon their collegiate course, full of hope and full of fear, victims of many practical jokes, but merry withal.

Then came the "boys in college," assuming airs from their superiority of knowing what was going on,—when came off the speeches,—who were to make them,—and what "societies" would gain the most distinguished honors. Then there was the "graduating class,"—its members generally happy, and over dressed, running to and fro, as connected with all sorts of incomprehensible committees; hunting up stray musicians, spurring on indolent landlords and heavy carpenters, and fretting and fuming generally, as they should, on such important occasions.

Prominent in the scene were the professors of the college, arrayed in a suit that never made its appearance but once in a year,—looking ineffably pleased, and seemingly as awkward and embarrassed in the confusion as the just initiated freshmen themselves; laborious, and generally conscientious men, but who seem to feel it is no stretch of truth to tell a thousand anxious parents, that "their boys" are the best in school, and the only ones "that give no trouble;" they looking the while careworn, and feeling their souls sunken into despondency, by the undutiful goings on of these very objects of so much maternal solicitude and professorial compliment.

Lastly, there is the "old Prex," with his gray hair, and frosty face, moving about like a father among his children, relaxed from his usual dignity, for his heart is really pained that he is soon to bid adieu to many that he loves, however severe he may have seemed. Good and generous old man! he moves across the college-green,—the promiscuous groups drop their conversation,—the ban-

ners wave,—the music splits the ear with discordant sounds,—and the procession forms and winds its way to the church, where the orations are to be delivered, and the degrees conferred.

The gay throng passes by, and what a glorious sight! They go not armed with the musket and sword, but with the vivifying power of knowledge: there are before you veterans in the cause of learning, as well as the just enlisted volunteer.

We kept with them our joyous step, and remember well the thrill of pleasure that filled our heart, as we performed our part in the peaceful pageantry; we have since helped make out the heavy tread of desolating soldiery; we have shouted, as we have aided in carrying our country's flag upon the battlements of our nation's foes; we have witnessed the fearful cost of such a triumph, and heard the loud acclaim of a nation's admiration;—yet, for all this, the sunshiny bands that issue annually from our collegiate halls, and under the ægis of peace, pursue their useful triumphs, do more for the real glory of their country than all the more showy, and more attractive sons of war.

How gay the old church looks! The altar is hidden by the well carpeted stage; the galleries are crowded with bright faces of beauty, and every where are to be seen the fond parents and the doting sisters, of those who have allotted parts in the exercises of the day. Long it seems they have waited, but anon the distant music is heard, and the whisper goes through the expectant assemblage that "they come;" presently, the faculty, the trustees, the graduates, the students, each in turn, make their appear-

ance, and the body of the vast building is completely filled. The band strikes up an enlivening air; the strains die away, when some appointed patriarch rises from his seat, and in solemn tones, offers up a prayer of thanksgiving to the common Father of all.

The student must, in his career through the world, act in more exciting scenes; he may himself, in time, preside over these very same ceremonies, or as a learned judge, or powerful statesman, become involved in acts, the solemnities of which are connected with more important relations, but he will remember more vividly than all else besides, the opening of his Commencement Day celebration; it is the first step he takes upon the road of life, where to turn back is impossible, while yet the future is all uncertainty.

Reynolds Calhoun and Graham Mildmay were evidently not only the popular orators with the students, but with the people. The first named had selected for his theme "The defence of the South;" the last mentioned, "The importance of a liberal education to the American student."

It had been whispered about, that both these young men had, under different names, travelled over almost the very same ground, and a deep anxiety was manifested, to hear what was presumed would be the bold and brilliant philippic of Calhoun, and the calm and close reasoning of the deep, but more reflective Mildmay; it may be judged therefore, what was the disappointment of all, when the President announced that,

"Reynolds Calhoun was excused."

"As I feared," whispered Mildmay to Adolph Ma-

rigny; "what a shame—the noblest sentiments, the most profound statesmanship, and the happiest diction, characterized his theme. Calhoun wrought it out under the heat inspired by some unjust and bitter anti-southern remarks he heard in the street, but the excitement gone, he has not had energy enough left to repeat it here, where alone it could be useful, and where alone he could make himself felt in defence."

The degrees were conferred, the pleasant excitement ceased, and Graham Mildmay stood before the audience. As valedictorian, he had stamped upon himself, without creating envy or rivals, the claim of superior scholarship over all the members of his class—this was no small honor—but he was, as we have already hinted, a favorite with the people of the town, his early history was known, and it was more than usually interesting. From circumstances peculiar to himself, he had mingled more in society than any of the other students, and the fact that he was so soon by separation, to be almost entirely lost to his early friends, gave unusual interest to his appearance.

Annie Hastings occupied a seat that commanded a perfect view of the stage, but was out of sight herself. As the tall form of Mildmay rose before her, she felt confounded with herself, upon perceiving that her face burned and her heart audibly beat.

"It must be the warmth of the room," thought she, while endeavoring to catch more air from her waving fan, for she continued, "I was never more oppressed in my life."

Mildmay, in his address, rapidly and clearly surveyed

what he conceived to be the popular prejudices of the people of the North against the South, and her peculiar institutions. He showed how slavery had been entailed upon the States by no choice of those whom Providence had selected to bear its responsibilities, and expatiated upon its patriarchal, and to the dependent, protective character.

He then treated of its moral influence upon society, denied that it weakened a love of liberty in the master, and illustrated his position by showing, that the leader of our revolution, and a galaxy of the highest names of that interesting period of our national history, were of the South.

He next dwelt upon the necessity of encouraging a paternal regard for the whole country, of taking liberal and enlightened views of all questions which treated of the diversified interests which came under the notice of the American citizen, and congratulated himself upon the fact, that although his home and his worldly interests were in the distant South, he had, by the accident of his education, learned to love and understand the people of the North.

Addressing particularly the students of the college, he said:

"Your leading and pervading thought should be, a contemplation of the stupendous country of which you are soon to be active citizens. If you find your sentiments cramped by sectionality, contemplate its vastness; if you lack enthusiasm, regard its glorious destiny.

"Remember that the fierce winds which revel about the great lakes, and in winter sweep down the Aroostook, are tempered in their southward course by the balmy airs of

the Mexican Gulf, and the heats of the Rio Grande. We hear the dashing surge of the wild Atlantic, as it beats against our rock-bound coast on the east, and while we listen, it is answered back in milder accents by the Pacific's wave in the west.

"But," he continued, "our physical strength, vast as it is, extending over almost a continent, is surpassed in interest and real importance by our moral culture. The little school-house that nestles in the corner of the road, contains a hidden strength, which far surpasses in power the wealth of our soil, or the mere geographical extent of our empire.

"Education, the parent of liberty,—whose influence withers kings, and consumes as with fire the power of the oppressor, finds a place among us, whether it be in the cottage of the poor man, or the proud mansion of the rich.

"We walk forth in the ennobling consciousness of sovereign power. We feel individually responsible for the administration of our Government; its emoluments, its honors, its glory, and its future, are in our individual keeping. If we strive to perfectly perform our task, we will leave as a heritage our own republican institutions."

Having concluded his literary exercise, amidst the wildest plaudits of a delighted auditory, he addressed severally the "Senate,"—the "Professors,"—then turning to the venerable President, who was already dissolved in tears of heartfelt admiration, he continued, "My father! to you I owe an ever to be unpaid debt of gratitude. Your kind hand has led me in safety through every seductive path of youth, and your patience and example have inspired me

with the necessity of wisdom, and the value of self-respect. I leave you, sir, with the hope that I shall carry to my distant and future home, such a well-founded determination to honor your memory, that I shall in time, like yourself command the respect of my fellow-citizens, and have it accorded to me, that I am not wholly useless in my day and generation.

"To you, my classmates, what can I say? Farewell, is the most expressive word—but yet how feeble, and how truly inadequate, to convey the feelings of my heart. Remember, as you struggle for fame, the associations of to-day, and always feel, that we are a family of brothers, scattered by necessity, not from choice—we have already the responsibilities of American citizens resting upon us, and if we fulfil them well, the most exalted dignity is ours. Again I say, farewell!"

Upon the breaking up of the vast assembly, Mildmay was surrounded by innumerable well wishers, who shook him by the hand, congratulated him upon his address, and expressed admiration of his personal and intellectual qualities.

For all these attentions he returned his thanks, with a manner so charming and so sincere, that he captivated all, as the most promising student that ever left the protection of the old college; and while the young and enthusiastic saw the future hero in Mildmay, the old and reflective marked out for him a life of exalted usefulness, that was one day, by its perfection, to make his name familiar with the great and important interests of the world.

CHAPTER III.

INCIDENTS OF MILDMAY'S EARLY HISTORY.

On the evening following the exercises of "Commencement," the residence of Dr. Elliott was thrown open, and there assembled under its hospitable roof the friends of the college of Malden, together with the alumni of the institution. The ceremony of reception being over, Dr. Elliott, and a few old friends, found themselves seated in a quiet place upon one of the spacious galleries that surrounded the house, and there rested from the fatigues of the day.

"You promised," said one of the visitors to Dr. Elliott, "that you would give us some reminiscences of young Mildmay, who has created such a sensation in his favor, as the orator of the day; let us know something, Doctor, of his personal history."

The kind-hearted instructor assented; and leaning back on his well-cushioned easy chair, he related what follows.

"It is now nearly twelve years ago, that I was one evening sitting in my parlor, at my old boarding-school,

when I heard a knock, and getting up to see who was desiring to come into the house, I met in the hall a lady, dressed in deep mourning, and leading by the hand a delicate-looking lad.

"After the usual compliments of meeting, she announced herself as a resident of North Carolina; she stated that she was a widow, and that the lad was her only son. She also said, that as he was heir to a large estate, she felt the importance of his receiving such an education, as would enable him in the best manner to discharge the responsible duties that would eventually devolve upon him. She added, that through a respected neighbor, a former pupil of mine, she was acquainted with my capacity (she was pleased to say) to teach, and trustworthiness as a guardian of her child.

"Nothing she said would have enabled her to make the sacrifice of being parted from him, although fully convinced of its propriety, but the fact, that it was the often expressed injunction of Graham's father, that he should at a suitable age be placed in a school at the North, and there remain until his education was complete.

"The separation of the mother from her child was one of the most painful things that I ever witnessed. After repeated attempts to take formal leave, she was finally obliged to steal away while he was asleep, and then hurried from Malden for fear that her heart would compel her to return.

"The lad I found of a good, but at times self-willed disposition; but as his mind expanded, he seemed to comprehend in a remarkable degree how much his mother had

sacrificed that he might receive the advantages of a good education, and, it would appear, that he had at an early day determined to achieve a triumph.

"The declining health of the mother, who had each successive year visited Malden, finally assumed a fatal character; and by some temporary derangement of the mails, the news of her decease did not reach Malden until nearly two weeks after the sad event. From that time I felt an additional interest in the success of Graham Mildmay.

"Upon the very day on which he was examined and declared to be well prepared to enter the freshman class of the college, I was by the partiality of my friends elected to the honored office of its President, so that Graham still continued a member of my family, even up to the present time; but to-day," said the Doctor, his voice husky with emotion, "he has, with his college honors, taken the place of a man in the wide world, and I lose one of the best of pupils,—and I will add, one of the most esteemed friends it has ever been my fortune to know.

"As a teacher, and I may say, parent of Graham, I have endeavored to conscientiously perform every promise made to his excellent mother, and I think he now presents to the world, a youth, of whom any fond father or doting mother might be proud."

This exhibition of pardonable pride in the Doctor, as he reflected upon the exercises of the day, and recalled the triumph of his *protégé*, was sympathized in by all of his auditors, and the conversation took a general character, the

burden of which was, Graham's future, which was prophesied would be a brilliant and useful career.

While the good Dr. Elliott was dwelling upon the history of his much-loved pupil, Mildmay was sitting in the imposing parlor of the Hastings House. Years ago had he first entered that old mansion, a thoughtless boy. In all times since then he had been received like a distant relation of the family, and was treated by the elderly members almost as a child; but it seemed to him, that now that he had graduated, a new spirit, and strange responsibilities possessed him.

Instead of running up the steps, as was his usual custom, he walked as gravely as any Hastings could, into the hall, where he met Annie, and, involuntarily, he gave the formal greeting of "Miss Hastings."

"Miss, indeed," echoed Annie, half amused, and half surprised.

"Yes, Miss Hastings," said Mildmay, a strange sensation of bewilderment coming over his mind.

"Upon my word," said the fair girl, with one of her merry laughs, "because you were the hero to-day, does it necessarily follow that your language must move on stilts."

"Not at all," returned Mildmay, as the two seated themselves in the parlor, his voice softened almost to a whisper, "but, Miss Hastings—Annie, I mean, are you aware, that I leave Malden to-morrow, and do you think that such a separation can be made without any deep emotion on my part?"

"I have no doubt you will feel deep regret at leaving

Dr. Elliott," said Annie, apparently very much occupied in arranging a bouquet of flowers on a table near by.

"I shall, as you say, feel deep regret at parting with Dr. Elliott, although I had not particularly recurred before to the fact," returned Mildmay, a little surprised himself at the reflection.

"Then you are certainly very ungrateful," said Annie, with a playfulness she evidently did not feel.

"Perhaps I am," replied Mildmay; "but Annie," he continued, "with the necessity of leaving Malden, I have most thought of leaving you. Malden has been for years my home,—within its precincts are many of my most vivid and pleasant recollections; but if I cannot take with me the assurance that I am held in esteem by you, and also the hope that I can return at some future time, and claim a higher place than friendship in your affections, then upon my departure will I be wretched indeed."

"You have certainly changed very much since yesterday, Graham," said Annie, maintaining her presence of mind, and controlling her feelings, "for to my knowledge," she continued, "you have been longing to get free from the summons of the college bell—those hateful professors—and, if your compliments at our tea table are not all pretence, still more hateful commons."

"True," answered Graham, "such should be my rejoicing, but it is not so; my fellow-students, when they abandon their *alma mater*, have warmer mothers to greet them, and a thousand long-neglected home associations to revive, but I have neither one nor the other. Away from Malden, and I leave my most cherished friends behind me,

and shall be a perfect stranger, even where my worldly interests are all centered, and where in the order of Providence I must find a home."

"True, true," replied Annie, her face full of sympathy, "what you say is true, but," she suggested, "will you not soon be in your distant South, and there find charms enough in those bright Hebe eyes we read about as so peculiar to a tropical clime, to make you soon, very soon forget the chilly atmosphere of our cold climate, and the awkwardly expressed friendships of our colder hearts."

"Do not say colder hearts, Annie," said Mildmay, seizing her unresisting hand, "say not even indifferent ones, for I have long indulged a hope that I may have awakened an interest in your affections, that might in time change from passing interest into love."

"Graham," said Annie, her eyes swimming in confusion, "could I have been spared this acknowledgment on your part, it would have saved me a great deal of pain, but how much more I should have felt, had you left Malden without this acknowledgment of esteem, I dare not say."

"Say not esteem, Annie," returned Mildmay, "say nothing if you can find no more genial word; rather let your silence give me the hope your tongue would deny."

"Graham," said Annie, the tears struggling in her eyes, "what hold in the future can our plain New England home retain upon one who has so wide a field of active life before him. I dare not indulge the thought, Graham, that you will not illustrate the proverbial fickleness of college friendships."

"Then," said Graham, with an energy that startled

Annie almost with alarm, "then you are not prepared to do justice to the truest heart that ever beat with love! Annie, my sentiments are not the growth of an hour, a caprice of a day; almost from the time we first met, have I indulged the ambitious hope of calling you at some future time my own."

At this frank declaration, not altogether unexpected, from the vague communings of Annie's inmost thoughts, she withdrew her hand from Graham, and bent her eyes for a moment on the ground, then recovering herself, she said:

"You may ascribe my conduct, Graham, to coldness, rather than education, but you know I have been raised to cultivate a self-sacrificing spirit. I dare not be too enthusiastic, dare not hope too much; therefore, Graham, speak only of friendship, not of love."

"I will do all that you please," said Graham, his face expressing joy; "only tell me," he continued, "that at some future time you will give me hope."

"Two years hence," said Annie, placing her hand in Graham's, "you will find me with a heart as free as now, and still Annie Hastings. If at the end of that time your college preferences are confirmed, in spite of your experience in the world, then Graham, and not till then, offer me your heart."

"And may I, in that long probation, write to you, Annie, from my southern home?" said Graham, staring into her pure face as if he would see her very soul.

"You may write, Graham, as we have in times past talked; we shall all be glad to hear from you, and I am

sure Dr. Elliott will let you often hear from your friends in Malden."

"Enough, enough," said Graham, passionately, pressing Annie's still imprisoned hand to his heart, and imprinting an unresisted kiss upon her forehead. "Enough, Annie," he again repeated. "And now," he continued, with animation, "the two long years of my probation shall be laboriously, but, because of your existence, hopefully spent. In that time I will have assumed full control of my long neglected estate; the cares of business will be light, because they are to be crowned with such a reward. I already feel—"

"No more!" said Annie, playfully interrupting him, "let us talk of other things."

The many words that were spoken in the long conversation that ensued, would to others appear cold and commonplace, but they were used only to beguile the ear of two young and hopeful beings, who uttered their real thoughts with their eyes, and responded through the deeper sympathy of united hearts.

CHAPTER IV.

MILDMAY PURCHASES "HERITAGE PLACE."

Mildmay, from the time that his mother died, had, each succeeding spring, passed two or three weeks on his plantation, and in that way was somewhat acquainted with the duties connected with his future career. His business had been, in his long absence at the North, all things considered, carefully attended to; and upon his arrival at home, after a due celebration by the negroes, of "Master's return," Mildmay was soon involved in the serious duties of life, and the novelty of his situation softened any severe regrets he felt for the scenes he had left at Malden."

Graham once at home, he occupied most of his leisure time in writing letters to his old master, in which he gave interesting details of his new pursuits, and amusing descriptions of the incidents of plantation life. These letters were received by the worthy Dr. Elliott, and carefully perused, and then quietly handed over to some member of the "Hastings family," with the remark, "that, perhaps, something from our young friend, Mildmay, would not be uninteresting."

With conscientious regularity, did the Doctor answer these friendly epistles. He had been made Mildmay's confidant in all that related to Annie Hastings, and cordially approving of the proposed union, without interfering, or in any way encouraging the intermediate steps, he had promised to act as we have seen, as the medium of communication, but not until fully authorized so to do, by the family of the "old Hastings House."

Whatever were Annie's feelings, no one but herself knew; it was noticeable among the members of her household, that upon receiving the Doctor's letters from Mildmay, she spent a longer time than usual in her room, and that those same epistles were never seen or heard of, after being once given into her possession. But, as the Doctor wrote to his former pupil, "Annie seemed entirely absorbed in household affairs, and in reading, and of late had visited even less than usual." There was, in truth, a quiet and dignified calmness about her manner, that met with the most cordial approbation from her staid relations.

Month after month quickly passed away, as Graham each day found new matters to occupy his attention. His confidential and trusty business man, Mr. Fenwick, who had so well managed the estate during Graham's minority, was anxious now to resign his trust into Graham's hands, preparatory to commencing business upon his own account.

Graham also found, that the lands he occupied, as well as those about him, had been worn out by long cultivation, and that he was really living in a deserted country. From Mr. Fenwick he learned the fact, that his father, at the time of his death, had made preparations to remove farther

south, and as such an act was more than ever demanded, he determined at once to set about the necessary preparations.

Graham, as will be seen, had no particular attachment to the "home place," and he looked forward with romantic interest to the founding of one himself, one worthy, as he thought, of Annie; a home in a new and vigorous State,—where he could rise with its fortunes, and identify his name with its prosperity.

With this noble ambition, and accompanied by Mr. Fenwick, and fortified with letters from the best men of his native State, in the course of a few days, Mildmay was sailing down the river Mississippi on his way to New Orleans. The solemn grandeur of the mighty Father of Waters made a deep impression upon him, but still more was he affected as he witnessed the evidences of progress, the rapid strides of civilization. His soul fairly expanded as he contemplated the developments of the future, and in the enthusiasm of the moment he thanked God, that he had been born to witness and take a part in the scenes around him.

Arriving at his place of destination in the month of December, he could hardly realize the fact, that the same season of year, which at Malden bound every thing in ice and snow, in Louisiana decked every thing in the most lovely vegetation, and breathed the balmy airs, of a genial spring.

For a few days Mildmay abandoned himself to the novelties presented by the anomalous character of the southern metropolis. His extensive reading prepared him to appreciate the strange architecture he met in the older parts

of the city, and his curiosity was excited and gratified by the Babel-like confusion that prevailed among the tongues and the people comprising the motley population.

Upon the broad and no-where-else to be seen "levee," he beheld in amazement, the accumulating agricultural wealth of the great valley of a mighty continent. He saw piled up before him for miles, the sugar, the cotton, the corn, and the tobacco,—treasures taken from the fields, yet, in vying abundance, there reposed side by side, vast piles of mineral wealth, of lead, of iron, of copper, dug from the embowelled earth.

Assembled in the magnificent halls of his sumptuous hotel, he found, constantly before his eye, representatives of all nations, each endeavoring to best display his superiority; but it was among the Southerners, who seemed to carry their hearts in their hand, and who were, as the representatives of the great planting interests, identified with himself, that he found the marked men of the multitude—the cordially-acknowledged princes of the crowd.

To this latter class Mildmay, who resembled them in person, was insensibly drawn by a thousand chords of sympathy, that had heretofore slumbered in his breast. He heard them speak of their crops, of their negroes, of their plantations; he saw their lavish expenditure of money; witnessed the respect they commanded, from all who conversed with them, and there rose in his bosom a consciousness of self-importance, which gave a new dignity to his carriage, and a wider range to his thoughts.

Fenwick, who was a practical sort of character, very soon made some congenial acquaintances, and with them,

he visited the neighboring plantations, and he could not suppress his enthusiasm at the richness of the vegetation he witnessed, and the easy manner with which they were made to produce an abundant crop, compared to the more sterile soil of North Carolina.

It soon became known among those interested, what Mildmay's business was, and offers of land came pouring in upon him, from a hundred quarters. Whole principalities were offered him in Texas, at nominal rates. Half opened plantations high up some still unfamiliar river, upon any terms he might choose to offer, but as the "location" came nearer New Orleans, the prices increased, until at last they reached enormous sums.

Among the acquaintances that Fenwick had picked up about the hotel, was a tall and rather attractive-looking individual, who rejoiced in the cognomen of Major Dixon. This Major Dixon was exceedingly affable, knew exactly the value of negroes, the prices of cotton and sugar, and seemed to be acquainted, from personal observation, with every bit of available land that was for sale, not only in Louisiana and North Carolina, but in half the Southern States.

To Fenwick, the Major was particularly attentive; though he did not seem indifferent, still he made no approach to speak with Mildmay, and it was not until Fenwick had dwelt in eloquent terms upon the value of the acquaintance, that Mildmay permitted himself to be introduced.

Major Dixon had a dashing off-hand manner, talked a great deal of good sense, but occasionally shocked Mildmay's sensibilities by a remark, which showed either a want of knowledge of the true use of words, or else an exceedingly callous heart.

Upon the subject of purchasing a plantation Major Dixon afforded much real information, for Mildmay found that his opinions were verified by gentlemen, to whom he had letters of credit and introduction, and there soon sprung up quite an exchange of time and conversation between Mildmay and the affable, knowing, and always apparently at leisure, Major Dixon.

That the acquaintance was respectable Mildmay did not doubt, for he found that gentlemen, who had been pointed out to him by the communicative clerk of the hotel, as some of the wealthiest planters of the State, frequently were with Dixon in some obscure corner engaged in long and apparently confidential conversations. Mildmay determined to solve the mystery, and commissioned Fenwick to learn who the attentive Major Dixon was.

Each day that Mildmay spent in New Orleans, he enlarged his circle of acquaintances, and finally accepted one or two invitations to visit wealthy planters living on "the coast." The more he saw of the country and the people the more he was delighted; and he returned to his hotel from his suburban trips, inspired with the determination to select a place at the earliest practicable moment, hasten home, and complete the laborious business of moving the accessories of a large plantation.

Among "the bargains" offered him, was one situated some two hundred miles or more above New Orleans, not directly upon the river, but presenting a remarkably fine body of land, on one of the many tributaries emptying into the Mississippi.

To this place Mildmay was particularly attracted, from

the fact, that it was placed for sale in the hands of an agent of the most responsible character, had already built upon it a fine mansion, and an abundance of negro cabins; in fact required nothing, as the advertisement asserted, but a "respectable force" to combine all the requirements of a "first class place."

Major Dixon knew all about the piece of land alluded to, and gave Mildmay a minute, and, as it afterwards proved, correct description of it.

He stated that it was originally opened by a wealthy man from South Carolina, who had ideas of style rather beyond his means, and became so involved by his many improvements, that he at last abandoned the property in disgust, and threw it upon the hands of those who had been most liberal in loaning him money.

"With fifty good hands," said Dixon, in conclusion of his remarks, "in two years the 'Heritage Place' can be made one of the most profitable properties in the country."

Mildmay and his companion Fenwick left New Orleans, and with an agent of the owners of the "Heritage Place," they took a small steamer, and for more than a day progressed up the Mississippi River. Sometime in the night, while Mildmay was asleep, the boat shot into "a bayou," and in professional parlance "laid up," until the following morning, and soon after Mildmay made his appearance, it commenced moving between narrowing shores, along which could occasionally be seen improved plantations, and the innumerable laborers at their daily work.

The country, though flat, was as beautiful and as rich in agricultural wealth as could be imagined. Towards noon

the little steamer, that went but three or four miles an hour, ran its bows into the landing at "Heritage Place," and leaving Mildmay and his friends, passed on its way, with the understanding, that in the course of the afternoon it would pick them up as it returned back to New Orleans.

Two or three acres distant from the shores of "the bayou," was a fine stately-looking dwelling, so massive, that it really had an imposing appearance. It had never been entirely finished, and already signs of decay were seen upon the brick pillars that supported the capacious verandahs.

In front and rear could be traced the old lines of what was once carefully planted shrubbery; and one or two sour orange-trees, in spite of neglect, were covered with ripened fruit. The fences were more or less broken down,—in fact, every thing had a desolate appearance.

Some half mile, in the rear, were twenty partially finished negro cabins, and other plantation out-buildings. It seemed as if some enterprising, and more than usually ambitious person, had commenced all these costly improvements, and just as they were about being completed, had suddenly abandoned them to destruction.

Fenwick, by the assistance of the agent, had borrowed a couple of horses from a neighboring plantation, and he and Mildmay rode over the "opened land."

They were gone some two or three hours, and the result of the ride had left upon both decidedly a favorable impression. Fenwick showed how little work it would be to restore things to tolerable order, and how in a year or so, Mildmay could have a place, that would outvie any thing he had ever dreamt of in his native State

Meanwhile, an overseer from an adjoining plantation had come over to see what was going on; and meeting the agent, and learning the particulars, he went in pursuit of Mildmay, and offered his services, and volunteered any information regarding the value of the property. This person and Fenwick became at once cosy and confidential, and he gave not only a history of the plantation in question, but also of the country round about.

It would seem that portions of it had been opened many years, and was almost entirely occupied by wealthy people, and in the vicinity were living some of the most influential men in the country. Except in "high water," it was rather an out-of-the-way place ("which was all the better for the niggers"), yet near to New Orleans,—free from any overflow to do harm, and inexhaustible in fertility of soil.

Mildmay listened, and took down the names of the different persons who would naturally be his neighbors; made every possible inquiry of the facilities of society,—not for himself, for he was in this connection thinking of another, and rode back to the lonely-looking mansion.

Here was "the agent," a sort of madcap clerk of New Orleans, who combined a strange mixture of business tact and knowledge of the world, and particularly of the world in the interior of Louisiana,—with his trunk opened, a table-cloth spread upon the ground, and a most substantial dinner set out, of boiled ham, chicken, bread, sardines, *patès*, and excellent claret. Tumblers and plates he had borrowed from the clerk of the steamer; and all the party, after Fenwick and Mildmay's astonishment had been expressed

at their agent's foresight, sat down on the ground, and made a hearty meal, and with a better appetite, as Mildmay said, "than he had ever had before in his life."

While thus engaged discussing their rural meal, they observed a gentleman approaching on horseback, who rode up, and dismounting and throwing his bridle-rein into the hollow of his left arm, in a graceful and confident manner, announced that his name was Moreton, and that he was the nearest neighbor to Heritage Place; that he had heard from the captain of the steamer as it passed up the bayou, that two gentlemen had stopped for the purpose of examining the place, with regard to making a purchase, and that he had instantly rode over to invite the gentlemen to his house, where he should be happy to have them remain as long as it suited their pleasure.

From Mr. Moreton, Mildmay learned additional particulars relative to his proposed purchase, but declined to accept at that time, the invitation to visit, whereupon Mr. Moreton hitched his horse by the bridle to a "swinging limb," and with Mildmay sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree, declaring that he would remain until the steamer came along.

In the conversation that ensued, Mildmay determined in his own mind to make the purchase of the plantation. Mr. Moreton had removed every possible objection he could urge, and, with this feeling, he bid that gentleman adieu, was taken up by the passing boat, and the following evening was again ensconced in his city hotel.

CHAPTER V.

MAJOR DIXON AND HIS ALBUM.

Major Dixon, who showed so much ability and disposition to serve Mildmay and his friend Fenwick, was to superficial observers a man of leisure, and of the class termed gentlemen.

Persons, however, who studied faces with success, would have discovered something rather equivocal about his eyes, for by a curious conformation of the brow, they were ordinarily almost hidden from sight; but let Dixon look a person full in the face, and there were seen shots of fiery red, mingled with the pure blue, which suggested that they could burn as if filled with internal fire.

People who had known Dixon for years, if asked to draw his character, would probably never have agreed upon any leading trait; for he possessed the ability in a remarkable degree of not only being all things to all men for his own purposes, but he could be the exact thing to the person he was at the moment with; and if Mildmay and Fenwick had written down their impressions of this man, they would have both drawn characters as suggested

by their individual impressions, and that were most agreeable to their positions as strangers in the "Crescent City."

Dixon was a man of first-rate business habits and capacity. He controlled large sums of money, for he was secretly connected with many wealthy men, in operations that involved great outlays of capital; his field of operations was confined to dealing in slaves,—in common parlance, he was a "negro trader." Dixon had been, by long habit, made a very impersonation of his business. To people of his own color he was often generous,—never offensive; but for the negro he had apparently no sympathy, no feeling whatever.

Sometimes for months together Dixon would live seemingly a quiet and unexcited life, but it would appear from subsequent acts, that these calms were only presages of a coming excitement; and as his business gave him every facility for gratifying his passions when he pleased to do so, he carried every thing to excess.

The appearance of a negro always excited Dixon's animosity; let one of this race pass him accidentally in the street, or even in the humblest manner address him "as master," and his eyes would burn with indignation, and his hands clutch with nervous tremulousness.

He delighted in crushing those in his power, when they resisted, and yet he was equally savage upon those who were passive to his will. He was sometimes awed by a negro that would rather die than submit, but he was never touched by the most heart-rending appeals for mercy.

The reason perhaps of his dislike to the negro, independent of the feelings necessarily engendered by his

making them subjects of merchandise, was the consciousness he had, that he was not respected even by those who were most benefited by his business; and he had a kind of monomania, that his degradation in the social scale was owing not only to his buying and selling negroes, but also to the influence of public opinion exerted on the Southern mind by the people of the North, through the sympathy of the Federal government: consequently, he hated the people of the North, and the Union, with a bitterness that knew no bounds. "But for this public opinion of the 'Free States,'" he would sometimes groan through his clenched teeth, "my calling would be as respectable as any man's; I should not then be made a scapegoat for the sins of the buyer, or be compelled to see myself shunned and avoided by really good people, as if there were contagion in my touch."

Yet, although the thick veil of insensibility would sometimes be partially removed from Dixon's conscience, although he would for moments get inklings of the true character of his position as set down by the great mass of the people, these feelings only had the effect to render him more callous in the end, for they were ever succeeded by new outrages upon his hapless victims, and by an accumulation of renewed hate for the people he so much feared and despised.

When Dixon saw Mildmay and Fenwick, he at once understood their relation and purposes, and with his usual promptness he did all he could to assist them in their contemplated purchase, from the ulterior object of their probable demand upon him for slaves.

He was intimately acquainted with every part of the country, his pursuits favoring a most perfect knowledge of the best lands, and the most wealthy neighborhoods, for it was only in such places, that he found his best business customers.

Near to Dixon's hotel was his "depot." Superficially, it was a very high spiked fence, with a strong door in the centre, and would never have attracted any particular notice of the stranger. But once beyond that strong door, you found yourself in a long room, perhaps a hundred feet in depth, lighted from the roof, and lined on either side by benches. Here Dixon displayed what the law pronounced to be his "chattels."

In this den he would pace up and down among his dependents, and fume and fret "that he could not expose his merchandise unblushingly in the streets," "that he could not hire a fine store in the most exposed thoroughfare, and thrust his goods into the windows or doors, as did the merchant who sold breastpins or calicoes."

Here it was that he gave vent to his wrath at the occasional agitation in the Corporation Council of New Orleans "as to the propriety of banishing 'slave marts' to the obscure suburbs of the city." This restraint—this eternal spirit of opposition, he felt to be like an incubus upon him, and he rebelled at, and fretted under it, as if in harness, and he believed that he could never himself be free until "this false northern public sentiment," as he termed it, "was done away, until no one was permitted in the South to indulge in sickly sentimental notions of humanity."

A day or two after Dixon met Mildmay, he went to his

"depot," as he termed it, and sitting down in the little office inside of the door, he took a scrap of paper from a plethoric-looking purse, and laying it on the wooden table before him, he seemed absorbed in a profound study.

"Graham Mildmay," said he, reading from the paper, "where have I met with that name before?" and he rested his head on his hand as if in the very strait of perplexity, and wondered where was his factotum Ben.

Just at this moment, a miserable-looking wretch, a white man, who sometimes helped Ben at the depot, put his head in at the office door, and said:

"Major Dixon, that 'gent' with the black coat and white choker, has sent the girl Lizzy back."

"What for?" said Dixon, indenting his knuckles into the top of the cypress table.

"Why," continued the deputy, scratching his head, "he says he thinks she takes on so about bein' parted from her child, that she won't do."

"Send Lizzy here," returned Dixon, now in a perfect fury; and he growled, "if I'm troubled with her after to-morrow, may I turn into a snivelling Yankee peddler, and earn a living by singing psalms."

The girl approached the dreaded presence of the negro trader, evidently convulsed in every limb, and almost speechless with fear.

"How came you to tell that hypocritical canting scoundrel I sold you to, that you had a child?"

"I didn't tell him, so help me God!" said the girl, ready to fall on the floor.

"You either lie, or you went snivelling about the house,"

said Dixon, suddenly changing his manner, and lighting up his face with a smile.

"I said nothing, did nothing, but try to please; for I didn't want to come back here, Master Dixon," said the girl with emotion.

"Well," returned Dixon, with a calm and agreeable voice, "go out in the hall, my dear, and to-night I will give you such a dressing, that afterwards, if I sell you to a sausage-maker you will cry to be cut up into mince meat before you will come back again on my hands;" and thus delivering himself, Dixon waved the girl to retire, and biting off a huge piece of tobacco, he took up the before alluded to bit of paper, and soliloquized,—"Where have I met with the name of Graham Mildmay?"

At this moment, a well dressed, and rather pleasant-faced man came into Dixon's presence, and pulling up a chair and throwing his feet upon the table, he asked:

"Dixon, what's the row?"

"Why, the fact is, Ben," said Dixon, as if perplexed, "I have met a young planter at my hotel, that's come out here from North Carolina to buy a place. He's got money, and seems to be a clever and sharp chap, and I'm thinking I've heard his name before, but when, where, or how, I can't tell."

Now "Ben" was Dixon's confidential clerk, and business man when Dixon was away. Ben was understood by half the town to own the depot. It was Ben who did all the nefarious work of the establishment, the trading, and, as he said, "the lying and smartness of the whole concern," for Dixon did very little in New Orleans openly, beyond signing title

papers and receipting for money. With this intimate connection with Dixon, it is easy to see that he at once became interested in Mildmay.

"What do you want to do for him?" said Ben, referring to Mildmay, and appearing anxious to get the cue.

"Why, I want to do him a favor," said Dixon, frowning at the apparent insinuation that any thing else was intended. "He's good next spring for twenty hands more than he's got, and I want to show him that I'm his friend, and in that way secure a sale."

"Maybe he's got a runaway out," said Ben.

"That's just it," said Dixon, brightening up, "here," he continued, "hand me down my 'Free Sile Album,' perhaps I can find out all about it."

Ben, as requested, got on a chair, and from a wide shelf very near the low ceiling, he pulled out what appeared to have been a merchant's ledger, and opening it on the table, displayed the once fairly written pages covered over with innumerable scraps, evidently cut from the columns of newspapers.

This "Free Sile Album," as Dixon called it, was perhaps the best evidence in the world, that could be given, to show how systematic he had been in carrying on his business. There at a glance could be seen, every published account of runaway negroes, who had escaped to the North or Canada, for the last fifteen years.

By the means of this book, Dixon had a very clear idea of the whereabouts of many fugitives, and with the assistance of spies, and occasionally his own interference, he made unaccounted-for "captures," and frequently by

buying, as he expressed it, "a nigger running," he got great bargains at little cost.

Ben turned over the pages carefully, and at Dixon's suggestion, endeavored to find, assorted with the runaways mentioned, the name of Mildmay.—Dixon, meanwhile, sitting by as if still uncertain where the name occurred; finally, Ben looked up, and said, "Here's something most like it."

"What is it?" inquired Dixon.

"Why, 'Mayfield,'" said Ben, decisively.

"That's near the name; read what it says," directed Dixon, whereupon Ben commenced as follows:—

"'On last Saturday morning a little company, consisting of six fugitives from the land of handcuffs and cowhides, landed at this station of the under-ground railroad. They were formerly kept and worked as the property of the Rev. Mr. Mayfield, near Memphis, in the State of Tennessee. On the same day fifteen more came in the express train of the above road. These last were mostly able-bodied men from Missouri, cruelly held and treated as property, by people otherwise respectable, and some claiming to be followers of Christ our Saviour, who died for all.'"

"That'll do, Ben," said Dixon, rising up from his seat, and whirling round on his feet, perfectly red with anger—"that'll do; who wants to hear such infernal stuff as that, I'd like to know? That comes from having 'free States,' cuss 'em! Fugatives from the land of handcuffs and cowhides! there's another slander on the South."

"Well, there's no use getting mad about it," said Ben, who had no other fear of Dixon, than self-interest dictated. "Maybe you'd like another varse or two; if so, here goes."

"No, you needn't," said Dixon, cooling off. "I believe I remember the sarcumstance, the nigger was off a long time I suspect, before his arrival was published; let me see."

"Now what is the use of that 'ere book?" asked Ben, handing it over to Dixon, as if he was glad to get clear of it.

"Not much use," returned Dixon, "not much use; but maybe you'd be astonished if I tell you, I made my 'Black River cotton farm' off of that very book."

"Oh, you're joking," said Ben, with an incredulous air.

"Fact, nevertheless," said Dixon, looking up with complacency. "You see, Ben, you'll never make money until you keep books. Now, since I've been in business for myself, and afore that too, when I saw a notice of a runaway in a newspaper, crowing over his freedom, I cut him out, and pasted him in here; it don't cost much time, nor flour, and it finally gave me all the money I made my start with. You see that 'ere notice," continued Dixon, pointing to a particular scrap, "that 'ere notice marked over with a pen, '$1000."

Ben reached his head out of his coat collar, and said, "he did."

"The particulars of making that 'ere cool thousand off a nigger barber, named Hector, that got from Washington to Canada, is very affecting.

"So much money as that!" said Ben, more astonished at the speculation in a pecuniary way, than at the affecting incidents.

"Sure," said Dixon, "and no mistake; but that's nothing," he continued, in an excessive good humor; "that book, as I said, has nearly paid for my 'Black River place,' and them very little dirty scraps, and the Fugitive Slave Law has put money in my pocket, like finding it in a gutter."

"Fact?" said Ben, looking over the magical items, as if he fancied he could see them turning to gold or bank checks.

"Fact!" echoed Dixon; "yes, more than fact, they've been money and fun besides, for I have not only, by the aid of that book, jerked up a dozen niggers from the free States in a year, but I have made the abolition scoundrels howl like hyenas, when they saw me and the 'spread eagle' on their tracks."

"That must have been fun," said Ben, rather in a voice of irony.

"It was fun, fun alive!" continued Dixon, with enthusiasm, "for," he continued, in his excitement, "it gave me the only satisfaction I ever had in my life out of those enemies of the South," and having thus uttered his sentiments, he fell to carefully examining the pages of the book.

CHAPTER VI.

BEN READS THE STORY OF CHARLES BROADNAX.

Dixon having been born in a State where there were no public schools, his early education had been lamentably neglected; he was a man grown before he knew his letters, and, although he had after that time shown his usual determination of character, in acquiring to read and write, still he was an imperfect scholar, and made a stumbling display when he attempted to give a listener an idea of the meaning of a printed paragraph, so that when his eye finally fell upon the very item he was looking for, he handed the "Album" to Ben, and told him to read it out, Dixon at the same time picking up a piece of pine wood that was lying on the floor, and taking out a long-bladed dirk-knife, commenced to whittle.

Ben took the "Album," and with a sort of comical gravity, squared himself in his chair, and commenced to read as follows:—

"'Interesting account of a Fugative.'"

"That's the beginning of the article, isn't it?" asked Dixon, pressing his knife deeply into the pine splinter in his hand.

"Yes," said Ben, "that's the beginning, don't you see it is? 'Interesting account of a fugative.'"

"Well, go on," said Dixon, impatiently.

"Look here, Major Dixon," said Ben, putting the Album down in his lap,—"do you want me to read the whole of this 'ere interesting article?"

"Yes, every bit of it," returned Dixon, in the pure spirit of contrariety.

"Very well," said Ben, again edging into the best possible position for comfort, "here goes.

"'Interesting account of a fugative.'"

"You needn't read that line again," said Dixon, growing perfectly "feruchus."

Ben's eyes twinkled with mischief, but he said nothing, and went on.

"'On a cold winter night of the year 18—, a negro man, evidently suffering from hunger, and poorly clad, knocked at the door of a modest-looking cottage on the edge of our town. It was, considering the habits of our people, quite late, being after ten o'clock.'"

"And where about was that town?" inquired Dixon, his face filled with disgust.

"I suspect," said Ben, looking along the page, "that it was Stonyville, Vermont, for it's tuck from the Stonyville (Vermont) Gazette." Ben continued:

"'A benevolent-looking, middle-aged woman opened the door, and seeing the dark and care-worn face of a negro, staring upon her, she uttered a scream of surprise, and dropped the candlestick she held in her hand upon the floor. In another instant a gentleman was at the lady's

side, and inquired, "Wife, what is the matter?" the lady pointed to the negro, who now, in turn, became filled with trepidation.'"

"What's the meaning of 'trepidation?'" inquired Dixon, suspending his whittling.

"Kind of a scear," said Ben, with dignity.

"'The moment the gentleman saw the object of surprise, he stepped in front of the lady, and promptly demanded the reason of this unseasonable interruption.'"

"I'd a hit him in his infernal black face!" said Dixon, with impatience.

"Perhaps," said Ben, again laying down the book in his lap (for in his peculiar way he took great pleasure in annoying Dixon), "perhaps you don't want to hear the rest of this 'ere nigger novel."

"Yes, I do," said Dixon, emphatically, for it was one of his peculiarities of liking to be annoyed by those very kind of items. It appeared to give him pleasure in stimulating his hatred of the places and sentiments that gave them birth. Ben went on:

"'The negro replied that he was nearly perished with the cold, and was almost starved to death, and after considerable cross-questioning, acknowledged that he was a runaway from the South, which last remark affected deeply the sympathy of Mr. Pendleton, for such was the gentleman's name, and he asked the negro into the kitchen, and with his amiable wife, set about relieving the wants of the poor fugitive.'"

"There," said Dixon, blazing with wrath, and driving

his knife an inch at least into the top of the table before him.

"There's northern rascality; that's for being fastened on to the free States. Lord! how I wish we could get to blows, I'd like to stop the wind of such a fellow as that Pendleton."

"But there's too many of 'em," said Ben, keeping his eyes deeply riveted on the printed document before him.

Dixon ground his knife around with his hand, and told Ben to go on, and that gentleman continued:—

"'The poor negro was shivering with cold, and it seemed as if he would embrace the stove, when he felt the pleasant glow of warmth it sent through his benumbed frame.'"

"I could have warmed that nigger up, without a stove," suggested Dixon, in a philosophical manner.

Ben pretended to be very much amused indeed, and went on.

"'Mr. Pendleton felt satisfied that the negro told the truth about having escaped from bondage, and was further confirmed in the fact, because the negro, against Mr. Pendleton's wishes, would address him as Master.'"

"Now what do you think of that?" inquired Dixon, his face eloquent with contempt.

"Think of what?" asked Ben, honestly at a loss.

"Why, of that fellow Pendleton's telling that nigger not to call him master."

"I think," said Ben, imitating Dixon's manner and voice, "that Pendleton was a chuckle-headed ass;" and he proceeded:—

"'The negro, when he discovered that Mr. Pendleton

knew he was from the South, begged that he should not be taken back to his owner, which Mr. Pendleton promised, so far as he was concerned, should not be done.'"

"Now look at that," said Dixon, perfectly calm with amazement, "look at that Pendleton, disobeying the laws of the land, and violating the sacred constitution, by refusing to send a negro back to his owner, and calling himself a Christian, perhaps; for them Yankees all go to church."

"And don't you think he was Christian?" inquired Ben.

"A Christian," replied Dixon, his voice full of scorn, "do you think that a thief can be a Christian? Why, that 'ere Pendleton would have been sent to the Penitentiary for keeping a runaway horse worth fifty dollars, and yet he don't mind swindling a southern man out of a nigger worth a thousand."

Now Ben was very slow of comprehension on certain subjects that deeply interested Dixon, and as he never could, probably from the defects of his early education, exactly confound a man and an animal together, he returned to his book and read :—

"'The negro was accommodated with lodgings that night, and the next day, by the kindness of Mr. P. and other citizens, he got employment, and very soon established a character for honesty and industry.

"It would be interesting, if we had time, to trace the history of this fugitive slave year after year in his northern home, and mark the rapid improvement made in intelligence and usefulness. In six months time he learned to read quite fluently, and soon arranging his varied experi-

ence, it was found he had naturally a strong and well-balanced mind, and unlike most of his race, he was frugal, and took pleasure in saving money.

"By the advice of Mr Pendleton, he hired a small house, and opened a little store, for the disposal of such nicknacks as he was able to procure, and finally he started what was much needed in Stoneyville, a barber's shop. In this new character, Charles, for such was his name, really had the head-quarters of news under lock and key, and his shop kept so neat and clean in summer, and so warm and snug in winter, was a favorite with all, while every one admitted that the negro was a model of good manners, and respectful bearing.'"

"Well, he got his manners in the South," said Dixon, putting an enormous piece of tobacco in his mouth.

"'At the close of the third year of his living in Stoneyville," continued Ben, without noticing Dixon's interruption, "Charles met a well-behaved young woman of his own color and unmarried, and as he had established a good character in the mean time as a member of the church, he was married by the resident pastor, being previously baptized by his request, with the surname of Broadnax.'"

"And what does all that mean?" inquired Dixon, getting confused with the details.

"Why," said Ben, "he was married as Charles Broadnax."

"'At last,' continued Ben to read, 'the old sexton of the "first church" in Stoneyville died, and Charles was unanimously elected to the office of taking care of the sacred

edifice, the duties of which he filled to the satisfaction of every one.'"

"Look here," said Ben, putting the book down in his lap, and taking a long breath, "Major, if you don't put in a word as I go along, I shan't read."

"And haven't you finished?" said Dixon, leaning over towards Ben, his eyes wide open with interest.

"No, there's another short item."

"Well, read it," said Dixon earnestly, "for you haven't come to the part I want to hear."

"Well, here goes," said Ben, resuming the narrative.

"'We have published this very interesting account of Charles Broadnax, as a refutation of the common charge that negroes cannot become useful citizens. This man, this Christian, admits that until his old master, William Mildmay, died, a gentleman Charles speaks of in the highest respect, that he was happy and contented; but that, put under the charge of a brutal and irresponsible overseer, he was compelled to escape.'"

By the time Ben got thus far, Dixon started from his seat, and dancing around the table, something as Indians do about a bloody scalp, he told Ben he needn't read any farther, that he had found out all that he wanted to know, and that he could put the precious book out of sight.

Ben, who was really fatigued, readily obeyed, and turning to Dixon, he said:

"So, you think Charles Broadnax, *esquire*, belongs to the young man Mildmay, at the hotel?"

Dixon leaned down on the table, made a few hieroglyphic marks on a piece of paper, then clapped his hat on

his head, and giving Ben a knowing look, he left "the depot," and walked rapidly up the street.

As Dixon had anticipated when he left his "pen," he found Mildmay in the rotunda of the hotel, quietly smoking a cigar, and walking up and saluting him, as was his custom when talking to planters, he took a seat at a respectful distance, and commenced conversation.

Dixon artfully approached his object, and led the unsuspecting Mildmay on from one point to another so ingeniously, that he unfolded his business of slave-dealer without exciting in his hearer any particular emotion.

This once accomplished, the advantages of the purchase of "Heritage Place" were discussed, and Mildmay finally learned with surprise, that Dixon himself had a plantation in the neighborhood, and that he, Dixon, contemplated in another year, "that he might possibly give up any active participation in 'his negro-trading business,' and settle down quietly on his farm."

From Dixon, Mildmay learned the best way of getting his slaves on to Louisiana; it was decided that he should bring them on to Washington, in the District of Columbia, and there keep them until a vessel sailed directly to New Orleans, from which point, they could without difficulty reach their final place of destination. At length, Dixon reached the subject for the moment nearest his heart.

"I think," said he, in a careless voice, and apparently about to leave, "that you have, Mr. Mildmay, a runaway somewhere in the East."

"Not that I know of," said the young man, without displaying any interest.

"I think I have heard somewhere," continued Dixon, "of a negro boy, called Charles, that belonged to a person of your name, — that runaway is probably at this time suffering, as all them runaways do, from hunger and cold. I tell you, sir," said Dixon, "a negro has a hard time of it at the North in winter;" and he assumed a sympathizing look.

"A negro certainly thrives best in a warm climate," said Mildmay; evidently to Dixon's annoyance, not thinking of the runaway.

"Here's the facts," said Dixon, taking out a scrap of paper from his pocket; "a negro boy, named Charles, some years ago escaped from Washington, and is now living in the North; he says he belonged to William Mildmay,"—and Dixon gave the best emphasis that he was capable of to the name.

Graham started with surprise; "William Mildmay," said he, with emotion, "was my father's name—what is it that you connect it with?"

"Simply," said Dixon, with great coolness, "that he was unfortunate in being robbed by them infernal Northeners, of a good nigger."

"The accident of having a runaway, sir," said Mildmay, with considerable sternness, "is a result of a thousand causes which I care not to discuss. Now I remember it, I have noticed upon the old plantation record, that a boy is set down as having run away while hired out; but it was many years ago, and I have never heard it otherwise alluded to before."

"Wouldn't you like to get him back?" said Dixon,

pretending to choke at the instant, to keep Mildmay from seeing the expression of his face.

"I can't say that I would," replied Mildmay, relapsing into an indifferent mood. "You know, Major Dixon, that it is a proverb among planters, 'that a recaptured runaway is unfit to associate with slaves.' I don't remember of ever hearing of one that the owner would have back as a gift."

"But suppose, sir, that the boy was discontented,—suppose he knew that you had taken possession of your property, and *wanted* to come back; what would you do then?"

"If such were the fact," said Mildmay speculatively, "why perhaps he might be a good servant,—especially as he did not run off until my father died."

"Exactly," said Dixon, "that's just it; but when he knows that he could come home, and live with you, why, wouldn't it be cruel not to let him?"

"I might," returned Mildmay, "then make a sacrifice of my judgment, and receive him; but such improbable circumstances I think never will occur."

"Would you be willing that I should bring him to you, if I should meet him?" pursued Dixon, pressing the matter with increasing earnestness.

"You can do as you please, sir," said Mildmay; then hesitating a moment, he continued, "If I found the boy troublesome or discontented, I could certainly let him go again."

"Certainly you can," said Dixon; and making this remark, he bowed gracefully, and returned to his depot.

Mildmay, who had received much valuable business information from Dixon, relative to his future plans, had continued the conversation about Charles out of respect to Dixon's seemingly earnest desire to talk, and not from any interest or real knowledge of what was the construed import of his language; yet when Dixon and Mildmay separated, the negro trader assumed that he had Mildmay's authority to arrest Charles, if he could find him, and bring him on to Heritage Place, while Mildmay himself could not have conceived any thing farther from his thoughts.

A few days only elapsed before Mildmay, much to Fenwick's satisfaction, had completed the proposed purchase. By a train of fortunate circumstances, he believed he had secured a great bargain, which opinion was confirmed by subsequent examination. The arrangements having been fully completed, Fenwick was desirous of hurrying away; and finding Mildmay disposed to carry out his desire to visit the surrounding country, he took from his employer some general directions, and rapidly pursued his way to his old home, to make preparations for the contemplated removal to Heritage Place.

CHAPTER VII.

A VARIETY OF INCIDENTS.

The difficulties attending the removal of Mildmay's "force" from the "old homestead," seemed to him at times to be almost insurmountable. His original intention was to send the stoutest of his men under the care of Fenwick to Richmond, and then send them by sea to New Orleans; but the negroes expressed the utmost horror at being separated, and as he found it impossible to make them understand that they were all to meet again in Louisiana, he determined at whatever cost and trouble it might be, to keep them all together, and personally superintend their exodus.

For several days the negroes were busy getting together "their plunder," and it was with some reluctance that they abandoned their rude tables, broken chairs, and clumsy hen-coops, when informed that they were too cumbrous for exportation; and nothing, perhaps, would have reconciled them to their loss, had they not discovered that their master set them the example, by discarding every thing not positively necessary for the long journey before them.

Mildmay discharged his duties, however, with spirit; he had very little local attachment for his birth-place, and but for the fact that the vicinity was hallowed by the memory of his parents, he would have left with scarce a lingering look behind. Beside, the rich lands of Heritage Place, their growth of gigantic magnolias, live-oak, and their teeming abundance, contrasted strangely bright with the worn-out, and originally sterile, soil of his native State.

Governor was the oracle among the negroes; he had accompanied his master in his travels, and he alone of all his fellow-servants could give information as to what they were to expect in the future; and half the long nights would he sit in the quarters, with an anxiously listening group of sable faces and staring eyes about him, and detail the wealth and magnificence that he witnessed "way-down upon the Mississippi."

Governor, in his official communications, was particularly eloquent about the growth of cotton, and expatiated upon it with never-tiring pertinacity.

"You don't have to get down on your knees, niggers," said he one evening, in his exaggerated mood, "to hunt up cotton bolls, as you do on dis North Carolina farm. Down in Louziany de cotton jist walks up so high, you can't reach it widout a ladder."

Several old "pickers" shook their heads doubtingly, while the young and inexperienced shouted with ecstasy.

"And how much does de niggers down dar pick a-day?" significantly asked a doubting "Tom."

"Oh, dey don't hurt 'emselves much at work," said

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Governor, laughing boisterously at his own wit; "dey just pick until dey leab off, and de rest of the time dey hunt possums."

"Bless God for dat!" said a piously disposed field hand; "bless God for fat possum!"

"But how's de sweet tater crap down dar?" inquired an old servant-of-all-work, but more especially of the kitchen garden.

"De fact is," said Governor, solemnly, a degree of sectional pride rising in his bosom, "de fact is, men ob color, dat de old 'North State,' as dey call dis place, can just beat de world cl'ar, for 'sweet taters.'"

A smile of the most intense satisfaction passed over the faces of Governor's auditory, and Jack was so overcome with joy, apparently, at this instance of local superiority, that he fell over backwards in his delight, and kicked Governor's bench from under him, both coming together on the ground.

This brought the conference to an end, and Governor, making many impotent threats of vengeance upon Jack's head, left in disgust.

"Aint dat mighty hard case, to hab no sweet taters down whar master's gwine!" groaned the matter-of-fact Tom, and suddenly impressed with an idea of vast importance to his mind, he hallooed after the retreating Governor.

"Does dey done hab pine knots down dar whar master's gwine?"

"Not a pine knot, not a pine knot, nebber heard of such a thing, down dar whar master's gwine," replied the

still indignant Governor, at the same time maliciously imitating the nasal twang of Tom's voice.

"Not a pine knot!" sighed the negroes in chorus; "Oh Lord!" they ejaculated, as the fearful truth broke in upon them, "what shall we do widout pine knots?" and the meeting broke up; the first really serious objection against removing to Louisiana, having impressed itself upon their minds.

At the proposed time for starting, five large wagons were filled with camp equipage, cooking utensils, sick or delicate women, and infant children. It was near noon when the long procession of wheeled vehicles and footmen, started from the old house, and gradually falling into line, commenced winding their toilsome way along the road.

By nightfall, the "emigrants" had passed beyond the familiar "vicinity" of their deserted home. A place was selected for the "encampment," and all was cheerful bustle. The negroes went merrily to work to cook their suppers, the fires blazed brightly in the open air, and sweet sleep, long ere midnight, rested upon the eyes of all, save those of the "young master."

From day to day the train pursued its onward but slow progress. The care and responsibility that rested upon Mildmay, hourly changed the giddy thoughts of youth into the solemn reflections of sobered maturity. As he rode ahead of his "helpless family," he could not help contrasting his position and duties with the lighter experience of his college days; and there were times when sorrow and vexation came upon him, and then he envied those

whose birth had relieved them of the heavy responsibilities that had been by Providence placed upon him.

If the negroes became dispirited, he encouraged them; if they were sick, he acted both as nurse and physician. If the wagons broke, he it was that personally superintended their repair. In truth, Mildmay alone was the thinking, responsible soul of the throng.

Week after week passed on, and Mildmay found himself approaching the end of the most laborious part of his tedious journey. He had left the mighty pine forests of North Carolina behind him, which, desolate as they seem, contain untold wealth, as the reward of well-directed industry, and was descending into the romantic valley of the Cumberland, in the State of Tennessee.

The change of vegetation and climate was perceptible. As the rich lands were met with, population increased, and the refinements of life followed in the train of wealth. The independent planters along the highways, often compelled Mildmay to be their guest, and assisted him in the temporary disposition of his negroes. Wherever he appeared he commanded respect, and often did the generous-hearted Tennesseans congratulate their sister State of Louisiana, upon the acquisition of such a noble and intelligent young man as one of her citizens.

As Graham neared the noble tributary of the Ohio, he became involved with innumerable bodies of emigrants, of every condition of life, who were, like himself, struggling on toward a new home.

The imagination cannot paint the scenes of misery and distress, and yet of hope, portrayed by the different fami-

lies as they moved along. Here were to be seen white men, as ignorant as their negroes, pursuing their way with the dogged firmness of American energy, carrying from habit their rifles on their shoulder; and followed by their wives, whose superior refinement and sensible ambition, made favorable contrasts with the sterner sex.

It would have afforded a curious example of Southern life, to the people of Malden, could they have seen their favorite student, their eloquent valedictorian, their refined and carefully arrayed Graham Mildmay; ride along their elm-embowered streets, as he now appeared at the approaching termination of this arduous journey to his prospective home.

His overcoat, which he constantly wore, was soiled; and his hat, originally broadbrimmed, to protect his face from the sun and rain, had wilted up under their combined influences, and flapped rowdily over his face; his thick, strong boots, were of a dingy yellow color, and half concealed by the heavy straps that fastened on his spurs. Around his waist was a belt, that relieved him from some fatigue while riding, and at nightfall, while he watched by the camp fire, held the protecting pistol.

Would Annie Hastings have discerned her ideal, through that rough exterior? The admiring friends of Malden would not; yet we think, that the microscopic eye of affection would have seen, in the case of attitude,—in the centaur attachment to the noble horse,—in the firm impress of the foot, though scarcely touching the stirrup,—in the sovereign carriage of the head,—in the self-reliance of the eye,—that such was indeed Graham, and that his

real merits shone forth sublime, although undecked by fashion's art.

Graham, after nearly two long, weary months, had the pleasure of seeing, while at his night watch, the puffing steam from a boat, that was gliding up the long-wished or Cumberland. The sight filled him with pleasure; the disagreeable part of his journey was at an end.

On the following morning, Fenwick, who had been dispatched ahead, some two or three days in advance, met Mildmay, as had been appointed, at his present encampment, and gave him the pleasant information, that on the second day following the fine steamer, "Great West," would be at "Ford's landing."

"This is more fortunate than I could have expected," said Mildmay.

"Great luck," said the imperturbable Fenwick; "only big boat in the river, last one too, for they say the water is going down, and they'll have to come to starn wheelers;" and the faithful Fenwick seemed almost exhausted with his volubility.

"How far are we from the ford, Fenwick?" asked Mildmay with impatient interest.

"Not more than a day's journey, if we push up a little," and having said this, Fenwick, who had been away for three days, without farther parley rode among the negroes, who were lazily, doggedly preparing for the accustomed start, and after bustling around, scolding, coaxing and ordering, informed them of the fact, that at night their foot travels would be at an end; which fact had a marvellous effect, not only upon the negroes, but apparently upon the

jaded cattle, for every thing moved merrily away. There was again heard the sounds of light-hearted laughter, and Jack in stentorian voice struck up an extemporaneous refrain, with a tremendous chorus of—

"Master's going down de ribber,
High O, high O,
Oh, he's de man wid a hundred niggers,
High O, high O,
Walk along steamboat, what you waiting for?
Whew—yaw, yaw, yaw."

In the course of the ensuing morning, Graham overtook an old wagon drawn by two skeleten oxen. Before the animals walked a sallow-faced man, with hair as stiff and colorless as hay. In the vehicle could be distinguished, in spite of the hoop-stretched cotton top, a poor woman, that seemed to be suffering intensely with the repeated attacks of the ague.

"Where are you from, stranger?" asked Graham, riding beside the man, and adopting, insensibly to himself, the language of the road.

"From old North Caroline," said the man doggedly, without looking up.

"And where are you going?" continued Graham, with some curiosity.

"I'm gwine to old Alabam," was the reply, whined out.

"By land all the way?" said Graham, feeling in his pocket.

"All the way, except I go to Notchee on the Massisip."

"How came you to leave the old North State?" pursued Graham, willing to be interested in any passing event.

"Why you see," said the animated automaton, tipping his poor oxen on the head with his whip, "Why you see, the tarpentine and cutting log business stopped on the Pedee, and the mast crap failed, so the stock died and I thought I'd go to Alabam, and commence again."

"And why do you go to Alabama, my friend," suggested Graham delicately, "when," he continued, "you pass so much good land upon your route?"

"Why you see, I want to get into a healthy region, said the man, glancing at his wife.

"Why, are there no healthy places save in Alabama?" queried Mildmay, now decidedly interested.

"No pine lands elsewhar, as I knows on," said the man, an air of intelligence for the first time brightening up his vacant face.

"You have a long way before you," said Graham in real sympathy; "and perhaps you will allow me to loan you a trifle, as I'm a North Carolinian myself;" and Graham held towards the man a few silver dollars.

"Not a cent," said the man resolutely, but casting his eyes behind him, and meeting the gaze of his wife he said: "Perhaps the old woman will have 'em. She wants some store medicine;" and with this remark he resumed his place beside his cattle, as if fatigued by conversation.

Graham added to the amount he had proposed to give to the man, placed the coins in the cold attenuated hand of the poor emigrant's wife, and received a smile in return,

that he credited to Annie Hastings, and then with a light heart galloped on after "his people."

It was ten o'clock at night before Mildmay reached "the ford." It appeared as if his cattle and his negroes had just strength to accomplish the journey, for they now all appeared to be absolutely broken down; the task completed, the spirit of the man no longer sustained his infirmities.

Very little pains was taken to arrange for the night; the horses were unharnessed where they stopped in the road, and after being carelessly fed, the negroes sat down, too fatigued and too happy to think of eating, and in most cases, while gazing into the clear blue water of the shining river, fell asleep.

Graham with his own hands, assisted Fenwick in making up a fire to protect his dependants from the night air, and with a solemn joy he sat down and thanked Heaven that the most dreaded task of his life had been so happily accomplished.

Graham's journey down the Cumberland was characterized by no startling incident. He was exceedingly fortunate in procuring a boat large enough to take his slaves, wagons and other property without difficulty on board. He superintended the erection of temporary benches behind the engines as sleeping places for his negroes, provided them with a large stove for cooking their victuals, and made them, under the circumstances, very happy indeed.

For himself he selected a comfortable state-room in the cabin, which he occupied most of the day, in resting from the fatigues he had gone through with, in reading, and what to him was of the greatest pleasurable importance,

in sketching an epitome of his "Wanderings through the Wilderness," which was carefully sealed, and at one of the way post-offices along the river, when the steamer stopped to procure wood, provisions or passengers, was mailed to Miss Annie Hastings, Malden.

Fenwick had a comfortable bed prepared among the negroes, and at night, at stated times, Mildmay took his watch while Fenwick slept, to preserve them from evil communications; from being enticed away; and for their general protection.

Night after night, when Graham's dependants were wrapped in oblivious, care-dissipating sleep, would he pace for long and solitary hours; a sentinel, who, not only guarded and defended, but had to think, act and provide for those who were placed in his charge. The sickening mists of the river would roll over his person, while he was at his post, the profane and reckless conversation of the deck hands would salute his ear—all was rough, ungenial, barbarous.

Once upon his new plantation, he soon became interested in the establishment of his force in their quarters, and in providing his overseer with a house. There were mechanics to employ, agricultural implements to be obtained, money to be procured, and a thousand annoyances he could not anticipate, favorable as were his circumstances, compared with thousands who seek a new home in the Southwest.

Mr. Moreton occasionally rode over to see Graham, and assisted him by many useful suggestions; but to return these visits, Graham never went abroad except on business. The summer and winter passed away, and spring came. The crop was in the ground, the prospect of the future was

bright, and as the necessity of exertion ceased, so did Graham relax from his cares, and begin to think of some repose as a reward for his unceasing industry.

It was now that his affection for Annie increased. He now had a home to invite her to, he longed for her society, he wished to hear her merry laugh ring through his house, and see her grace his now solitary table. Fenwick was competent and trustworthy, and, sooner than he intended, Graham made his preparations to visit the North.

Judging from Annie's letters (for within the last year Graham and Annie had directly corresponded with each other), a responsive chord had been touched in her bosom. The cold calm reserve of her first epistles, had given way to a tone of unrestrained confidence.

It was these letters that gilded all of Graham's cares. In the solitary musings of his journey through the "Old North State," in his repose by the side of his camp fire among the rich lands and hospitable people of Tennessee, at his midnight watch on the Mississippi, or his solitary hours at Heritage Place, Annie's letters had been his greatest solace, and he exulted that he had awakened an interest in her heart, and that she was the chosen companion of his life.

Every thing with Graham had gone well. The young planter felt just pride as he rode over his broad acres, and witnessed the improvements of Heritage Place. The neglected out-buildings were now neat and comfortable, the dilapidated fences were all repaired; and there were evidences of a coming reward for agricultural labor, pursued under his own observant eye.

Graham, in fact, seemed destined to great worldly prosperity. On the same day he received a letter from North Carolina announcing his probable heirship to a handsome estate, left by a distant relative of whose existence he had never before heard, and one from his commission merchant in New Orleans, offering him a large advance on the original amount he gave for Heritage Place

Nearly two years had passed since he left Malden. Now relieved of the pressure of business cares, he determined, even sooner than he had intended, to visit the North. His arrangements were soon made, and leaving every thing in charge of Fenwick, he set out upon his long anticipated trip. Graham once upon his journey, was himself surprised at his own impatience. Night and day he had but one idea, and that was, to speed on his way.

Arriving at Malden, he at once proceeded to his hotel. As he rattled along its streets, he recognized the familiar buildings as they appeared to dance when looked at through the windows of the coach, and recognized the happy faces of many merchants and citizens with whom he was familiar. There were students too, standing about in groups, whose listless gait and abstracted airs brought old time feelings to his heart. The coach rattled on. The familiar house of Dr. Elliott, rising against the sky from its commanding position, seemed to float by him as if whirling in a circle of which he was the centre—anon there came familiar trees and shady walks, then rushed by him the old Hastings House, the window panes glistening like crystal, all quiet, all repose, and he sank back upon his cushioned seat, almost suffocated with the swellings and throbbings of his heart.

Another instant and the vehicle stopped. Its door was opened, and Mildmay jumped out upon the pavement. "Mildmay," "Graham," shouted a dozen voices at once, and he was overwhelmed with gratulations.

His fellow students, who had, as freshmen, heard his eloquent valedictory, but now grown into solemn juniors, fairly hugged him round the neck, while the honest old landlord of the "Hotel" stood by, and when he could get an opportunity helped Graham up the steps as if he were his own long lost but now returned son.

It was the idle hour of the day at Malden, and the news spread from mouth to mouth, and ran along the streets with telegraphic quickness, that "Graham Mildmay had come!"

There was an absolute sensation of pleasure that beat like a pulse among all the people, so much was Graham beloved. Dr. Elliott caught the news, as he was working in his flower-garden, and by twilight trimming into shape a honeysuckle vine, and the good old man, just where he was, fell upon his knees and returned thanks to Heaven, that he was to see his "beloved child again."

Annie the while was in her own room, looking over Graham's last letter. "He will certainly be here the day after to-morrow, if he is not mistaken in the time; he surely would not delay on the way," she reflected, as the blood mantled to her cheeks, and while thus engaged at her own speculations and communing with her own thoughts, a favorite but stately old female servant of the Hastings family stole up to Annie's room and gently pushed at the door, but finding it locked she stopped and said:

"Mistress Annie, *he's* come."

"Where?" said Annie, looking around vaguely.

"Not here yet, but at the hotel," replied the solemn old servant, walking away.

Annie sat a moment like one entranced. Her delicate face grew red and pale, and then crushing Graham's letter to her face she found relief in deep, scalding, gushing tears.

As soon as Graham could do so, he slipped away from his friends, and his first act was to write and dispatch a note to the old Hastings House, and half an hour afterwards he was rapidly threading the familiar streets of Malden.

Annie, pale with excitement, sat in the old parlor, buried in an arm-chair, with a book upside down in her hand, yet one would suppose, from her intent gaze upon it, that she was busy reading. The time since Graham had last seen her had wrought many changes in her appearance. She was now in the full perfection of maidenly beauty. She was, too, somewhat grown in height, her form was full and round, and there was a thoughtful, responsible expression about her eye, making it far more beautiful than in the times that were past.

The grim old puritan female servant of the Hastings family, had lived for years, it might almost be said for a century, in the house, and had never in all that time shown any more sentiment or geniality than would a pillar of ice. She had known Annie from her infancy, and yet had in all that time coldly and respectfully done her duty toward the young lady, frowning down any thanks or professions of love as if they were mortal sins. But now she was roused. It would seem that she had watched the love passages between

the young people, and for the first time to Annie's knowledge had she shown some symptoms of sympathy with the affairs of the heart; in announcing Graham's arrival, and when he came upon the steps of the old mansion, before even his impatient hand was lifted, she opened the door, and gently letting Graham in, she pointed to the parlor and said:

"She's there,—alone," and disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PLEASANT DREAM MADE REALITY.

The summer to Graham and Annie passed rapidly away, and with the fall came the preparations for "the master's" return to the South.

On the morning following the marriage, there stood in front of the old Hastings House a carriage, and all the familiar preparations for a long journey. Presently the door opened and Graham, with Annie in her travelling dress and leaning upon his arm, made his appearance. The rear of the group was filled up with a number of persons, in whose faces smiles were seen struggling with tears.

The farewells had been uttered, the last embraces given. As the carriage door closed upon Graham and Annie, the young wife thrust her hand through the window, and waved her adieus as long as those who had so carefully raised and so fondly loved her could be seen; but soon recovering her self-possession, she seized Mildmay's hand, and looking in his face with childlike confidence, asked:

"How long, Graham, shall we be in getting *home?*"

Graham, once on his way South, became anxious to reach his journey's end, and by such progress as was not fatiguing to Annie, he was soon upon the Ohio, and rapidly descending the Mississippi.

The rivers were low and the best class of accommodations were not to be had, but to Annie, this very want of facilities proved a source of constant amusement.

Heritage Place, as has been described, was off the river some twenty miles, and approached by a bayou, which in the spring of the year was navigable. When Graham landed at the point on the river nearest his plantation, he found that he would have to make the rest of the journey by land, or in a skiff, as the bayou was now almost dried up.

There were no families residing near "the landing," and no places of accommodation that could afford a comfortable shelter for the night; and this unexpected difficulty gave Graham a great deal of annoyance. As the steamer on which they had lived so pleasantly for many days disappeared, it seemed to Annie that she and Mildmay had been abandoned in the forests.

Two negroes who were employed in chopping wood near by, came forward, and instantly recognized "Master Mildmay," and by their assistance Graham got his trunks up the steep bank, and deposited them and Annie under the shade of a wide-spreading tree. The negroes then ran off and said they would return with their master.

"This is rather rough, Annie," said Graham, looking around, "but it is very rarely that persons find themselves in our strait. If Fenwick could have anticipated our arri-

val," he continued, "the carriage would have been in waiting."

"It's only twenty miles you say, Graham, and then we are home," suggested Annie.

"Only twenty."

"Then let us go at once," said the young wife, "for I verily believe I could walk all the way."

"You are a brave girl," said Mildmay, laughing, "but we will do better than that; see, here comes some one who will assist us," and Graham looked towards the proprietor of one of the log cabins in the neighborhood.

A rough-looking man came up, and instantly recognized Graham, and shook him cordially by the hand. He said, among other things, that he had been "down the bayou," a few days before; had seen Fenwick; that every thing looked well, and promised a fine crop, and also, that Fenwick did not expect Mildmay for a week.

This gossip was exceedingly gratifying to Mildmay, and it was soon arranged, that he would go home in a "skiff," as there was water enough for that purpose. The baggage was removed to the light boat, the two negroes took their places as oarsmen, and Graham helped Annie into the stern, and took his place beside her. In the course of two hours they were sailing merrily along, soon comparatively to be at the end of the journey.

As the skiff proceeded, Graham explained to Annie how it was, that in "high water," the dark muddy sluiceway through which they were then travelling would contain a flood, in which the largest ships could navigate; and

by other descriptions of scenery, and pleasant incidents, he beguiled the time.

Gradually the sun settled down in the west, and the deep, dark shadows of the primitive forests shrouded the earth; Annie instinctively clung closer to Graham, her terrors in spite of herself, sometimes almost overcoming her self-possession.

Four hours had passed away, when in the bend of the bayou, far ahead, Annie saw, rising up from among the trees, a stately mansion. It presented an imposing effect in the dim light.

"Is that a delusion?" said Annie, pointing to the house, that seemed, from the motion of the skiff, to be itself moving about.

Graham stared curiously a moment, and then recognized Annie's home; but so altered, by a thorough painting, since he had been away, that for a moment he did not know it himself.

"That is the end of our journey; in a few moments more we shall be in our own house."

"I can hardly realize it," said Annie; "and more, it seems so strange, to see such mansions rising out of these desolate-looking woods."

"To-morrow all will be changed. Once," he continued, "on the banks above us, and you will see a country of surpassing loveliness."

"Go 'long dar"—"what you 'bout, Brandy"—"step along, Gen. Jackson"—"what's you doing, Logan," and other colloquial sounds, suddenly rose from the woods,

frightening the owls, who, not yet fairly awake, went whooping like Indian spirits off into the solitudes.

"As I live," said Graham, to Annie, "I believe that is old Ben's voice—Ben—Ho! Ben," shouted Graham, so loudly, that he perfectly astonished Annie with his vehemence.

"Crack," "snap," went the ox-goad, popping like a pistol, while the heavy wheels of the cart, seemed to grind into the earth the limbs of trees over which they were moving.

"Ben—Ben, I say!" again shouted Graham.

"Whoa!" Ben was heard to say; instantly all was still, and again Graham called.

The next moment there was seen, on the banks of the bayou, and almost over the skiff, the dark form of a negro, over whose shoulders rested a long-handled whip.

"Who calls old Ben down dar?" said the man, staring wildly about.

"Your master," said Graham, half vexed at old Ben's obtuseness.

"Say dat agin!" said old Ben, commencing a sort of extempore jig, as most expressive of his joy, at his master's return.

The skiff had now fairly rounded the point, on which Ben stood, and coming near him, Graham said:

"Ben, why don't you hurry off to the house, and tell Mr. Fenwick I am coming, with your mistress, up the bayou."

The negro stopped to hear no more; in another instant he was rushing along in the dark, like a perturbed spirit,

yelling and laughing by turns, and when he could find time, saying:—

"Master's come! master's come!"

It was now completely dark; there had been nothing to guide the rowers, but the silver thread of the stream, relieved against the gloom; but in a few moments lights sprung up in different directions, and were seen moving to and fro, and finally all came together at one point.

Anon, the snorting of a horse, then the heavy tramp of hoofs, and then Fenwick was heard to say,

"This way, you scoundrels, with those torches—here's the landing."

All this seemed to Annie as if she were in a dream; she could not believe its reality; even Mildmay appeared changed; for, from the dim light reflected on his face, he seemed to have turned to bronze.

The negroes who rowed the "skiff," now turned it towards the concentration of lights, and in a moment more it ceased to move, for want of the proper depth of water.

Gradually the location of things developed themselves to Graham; for the first time, he knew exactly where he was, and he found that between him and the solid earth was twenty feet of soft, muddy deposit of the bayou.

As soon, however, as the skiff was discovered from the shore, there rushed to it a dozen stout negroes; many bearing torches, and all anxious to see "master." Graham rose up, and hurriedly saluted his dependants, and then gave directions for getting him out of his temporary difficulties. Forgetting, at the moment, that Annie had never seen a dozen negroes in her life, until within

the few days she had been on a western steamer, he ordered some of his men "to carefully lift her ashore."

Annie heard the order with astonishment; it seemed in the momentary exaggeration of her fears, that Graham designed her for destruction, and throwing her arms around his neck in unqualified terror, she exclaimed :—

"No, no, don't consign me to these men."

In an instant Graham comprehended Annie's feelings, and with an inward consciousness of deep pain at his want of consideration, he sternly commanded the officious negroes to stand aside; and now communicating freely with Fenwick, ordered him to get some plank or rails, and make such a walk, as he could, with safety, help Annie over himself.

The suggestion once made, it was instantly carried into effect, and Annie, trembling in every limb with excitement, reached the shore.

In a few moments more she was in her own room, where the careful "Clemmy," the house servant, had considerately prepared a blazing fire upon the hearth. But the excitement had confused her mind. She was feverish and restless; her imagination was filled with dark, mysterious caverns, and strange-looking beings with torches, who seemed determined to seize hold of her in some way, and do her injury. Then there were the many dependants of Mildmay, who, in their clamorous joy, were crowding into the doors and windows to see "master" and "mistress." All these things overcame Annie, and she weepingly begged Graham to dispense with all attendants, and sit

down beside her, that she might feel, and gradually comprehend, that they were alone.

In a little while Annie entirely recovered her self-possession, and with a smile of heaven-born benignity, she congratulated herself that her travels were at an end. Night closed in, the angel of peace spread her wings over the domestic scene; Graham's fondest hope was realized; Annie was indeed mistress of Heritage Place.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL ENTERPRISE.

Stoneyville is one of the most pleasant towns in the rural State of Vermont. It is in an out-of-the-way nook, on the very edge of the great currents of travel, yet not perceptibly influenced by them, for it retains most of its old-times features, a large number of its best houses having been in existence at the time of the Revolution. Stoneyville is also somewhat remarkable for possessing an old ruin; a thing rare, indeed, in New England. Past the edge of the village, flowed a spring-fed stream, which, at the lower part of the town, widened into quite a deep lake. Upon some rocks in the centre of this sheet of water, had many years before, been built by an unsuccessful speculator, a flour mill, now in decay; it having been discovered when too late, that the enterprise needed two things to make it succeed; enough swift-running water to turn the mill, and enough wheat to keep it busy; both were wanted, but what the disappointed miller lost, the town of Stoneyville gained in the picturesque.

The traditions of Stoneyville are very interesting: the

little boys can point out the very spot where they say General Stark stood, when he made his famous address to his soldiers; where the Green Mountain Boys bivouacked a few days before the battle of Bennington. They also have traditions of wounded soldiers, that were brought into the town, and lodged in specified houses, and who died encouraging the living never to surrender their liberties until death.

These incidents are characteristic of the town of Stoneyville, but in them was all the bloodshed and violence that were familiar to the people, for no place was more peaceable, more primitive, than this little village. The uses of law were scarcely known, the poor-house and the jail were alike almost destitute of tenants. But for the many flourishing schools within its vicinity, and the consequent visiting of anxious parents, to witness the progress of their children, Stoneyville would have been forgotten, save to the little world of which it was the centre.

Here it was the good fortune of Charles Broadnax, of whom we have heard in another chapter, to find a retreat, and here he had resided in peace, and would probably have continued to do so to the end of his days, had not his prosperity attracted the good-natured attention of the local editor; who thus, while intending to compliment him, brought a knowledge of his whereabouts to the eye of Major Dixon, the bitter enemy of the African race.

The negro trader, in due course of time, for the accomplishment of his plans, having informed himself in Washington of the locality of Stoneyville, and also of the character of its inhabitants, chuckled over the prospect of the

"hell of a fuss he was going to kick up among the Yankees;" and obtaining a temporary commission as United States Marshal, for one of his "own men," and selecting two others, who hung about the slave depots in Washington, for assistants; armed with the "solemn authority of law," and what they deemed necessary appendages, revolvers and bowie knives; the four were soon in the State of Vermont, and managed to remain long enough to concoct their plans at the railroad station, some five miles from Stoneyville, without, in the hurry and bustle of the passing to and fro, attracting any particular attention.

Having secured a room at the railroad hotel, Dixon made his companions place all their weapons in his trunk, which he locked up; observing that if any of the inhabitants saw any of their "playthings," they would know that they were Southerners negro-hunting, and give the alarm. He then cautioned them not to swagger, or get intoxicated, but behave themselves until he returned; for, ever intent on business, he proposed at once to proceed on foot to Stoneyville; reconnoitre the place, find out where Charles was, lay all his plans; and then, with the assistance of his confederates, make the capture.

With these ideas, he started up the road that led to his place of destination. It was a pleasant September afternoon; all nature smiled,—the naturally sterile hill sides were mantled with ripening fruits,—and the hay fields filled the air with fragrance. A long way off there could be seen the modest spire of Stoneyville church, glistening just above the intervening hills.

"I wonder how these ere people manage to live,"

soliloquized Dixon, as he strode along; "cuss me!" he continued, looking around, "if they don't seem to keep fat on blue stone, for they've not much else to eat:" and then looking ahead, and perceiving the spire of the church, that for a moment came in full view, he said, "Thar's a church; I suppose that's the shop Charles is sexton of; why didn't they make him the preacher, or send him to Congress?"

Just at this moment there came rattling along a two-horse wagon, driven by a merry boy, some twelve years old; the horses in perfect condition, and looking fairly gay under their well-kept harness.

"Wal, I raythor guess you'd better ride," said the boy, holding up his steeds, to get Dixon's answer.

"How far are you going?" inquired Dixon, his hand already on the fore wheel, ready to mount.

"Wal, I'm goin' near tu Stoneyville, but not right tu it," said the little teamster, his eyes dancing with life and health.

Another moment, and the Major was hurried along at a swinging trot; and being a good judge of a horse, "almost as good," to use his own language, "as he was of niggers," he appeared highly delighted with his unexpected good fortune.

It seemed to Dixon but a few moments before the boy stopped, and told him, although the town was entirely hidden from view, that just beyond the spur of the hill ahead, he would be at Stoneyville. Dixon jumped into the road, and taking from his pocket a twenty-five cent piece, offered it to the boy.

"I hain't got no change," said the little fellow, gathering up the reins to move on.

"Never mind the change," said Dixon, laughing.

"Wal, I hope you don't guess I'll take all that money fur such a little ride, do you?"

"I guess you will," sneeringly returned Dixon, all of his hatred of the Yankee character being revived by the nasal twang of the urchin; "I guess you will take it, and you'd better buy one of these farms with part of it, and keep the rest to build you a house."

The boy took the money with evident surprise at the liberality of the gift marked on his face, and laughed heartily at Dixon's remark, for he understood it exactly different from what it was intended; and then touching up his horses, soon rattled on out of sight.

Now something in all this had annoyed Dixon, and he strode on to the village in exceeding bad humor. Although it was in the usual business hours of the day, he saw no one in the streets; the houses set back from the road,—the front doors were generally open,—but all was still. He passed one or two modest-looking stores; the inmates seemed to be absorbed in books, or half asleep. At the extreme end of the town he discovered an old-fashioned tavern sign, and to it he wended his way.

Suddenly he heard the hum of busy voices, merry laughter, and other signs of life; and it appeared to him that by a simultaneous movement, the heretofore quiet streets were alive with children. The merry urchins poured out from almost every house, and went whooping in merry troops up and down the streets. Such a con-

tinued array of white faces, and rosy cheeks, depressed Dixon; and at the moment, he would have looked upon a negro, if legitimately in his presence, with all the sentiment of suddenly seeing among strangers a familiar face.

Dixon soon made an interested friend of the landlord of the "Farmer's Inn;" and although out of the usual hour, he ordered some refreshments, and then asked to be directed to the village barber. The landlord pointed him out the shop, and then disappeared to attend to his unexpected call for a dinner.

Charles Broadnax lived near the centre of the village, and opposite the church. Over the door, in simple letters, was the name; and on the inside, the negro man could be seen busily dusting off the various articles that composed his stock in trade. A dark and terrible expression passed over the face of Dixon, as he saw the negro; but by a great effort of will, he controlled himself, and entered the "saloon."

Charles, with professional courtesy, made the usual bow; and asked what the gentleman would have. Dixon signified his desire, and in another moment was undergoing the necessary, but not very poetical infliction of being shaved. Charles was at leisure, and took more than usual pains to please; and when Dixon came from under his manipulations, he looked vastly improved.

Before Dixon left, Charles's two children, of seven and nine years of age, came into the shop, and leaving some message, immediately went out again. Dixon paid his bill, and casually inquired:

"You have some children, I see?"

"Yes," said Charles, "I have got four."

"And how do you like living in this cold country?" inquired Dixon, pretending to be very much interested with a picture that ornamented the wall.

There was something in the tone of voice and manner of Dixon that now alarmed Charles, yet he could not tell why. The sound of the voice,—the cold, distrustful, and evidently unsympathizing expression,—revived recollections that had been slumbering in his memory for years; and yet, while his heart sunk within him, nothing visible to his eye seemed to justify his fears.

Dixon saw the mental agitation of his victim, and was confirmed in his idea that he was talking to *the fugitive;* but to place the matter beyond a doubt, he said:

"I rode up from the railroad depot with one of your citizens, and I have heard your story with a great deal of interest."

"Ah!" said Charles, instantly recovering his spirits (for his escape from slavery was quite a familiar romance in the vicinity); "many people do talk of my having come from the South; but for that, I should almost forget it myself."

Dixon said no more, but walked back to the "Farmers' Inn," and commenced in excellent spirits his plain, but neatly dressed, and substantial dinner. The landlord was a garrulous man, and talked about a thousand things of no possible interest to Dixon; but upon that gentleman mentioning what an excellent barber the town of Stoneyville was blessed with, Boniface went into the whole details of Charles's coming to the town,—his early struggle

to maintain himself,—and his final triumphs; and then launched off into a tirade against slavery, and wound up with loud denunciations on the head of negro traders, whom the landlord said he had Charles's authority for asserting "were a pack of thieving scoundrels, who would do any thing base to sell the souls and bodies of the unfortunate slave."

"Did that nigger barber say that?" growled Dixon, as well as he could, with his mouth full of excellent pudding.

The landlord, perfectly delighted that he had at last touched upon a subject that interested his guest, replied:

"Yes, he said that; and I'll add," continued the landlord, determined to be agreeable, "that a man that will give himself up to make a trade of selling human beings,—to separating parents and children,—deserves to go down to the bottomless pit, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

"That's your opinion, is it?" said Dixon, perfectly strangled with wrath, and purple in his face.

"It is," said the landlord, still unconscious of the effect of his remarks; "and it's the opinion of every decent man in the country;"—and then pausing a moment, and giving his language great effect, he continued: "Charles says, that in the South even, a nigger trader is despised and loathed, and not allowed to sit at a gentleman's table; and if such is the case ——"

"Shut up your infernal gab!" finally roared Dixon, almost in an apoplectic fit, "and the devil take Charles!—

Can't you let a man eat a meal in your house, without insulting him, you chuckle-headed fool?"

The landlord fell back against the wall, overcome with astonishment.

"I hope I haven't offended you!" he said, the moment he could speak.

Dixon, who had convulsively seized the carving knife before him, and half risen in his chair, dropped the weapon, and settling back in his seat, while his face was still black with indignation, he begged the landlord to excuse him, "as he was subject to flows of blood to the head."

In a few moments he paid his bill, and walked precipitately into the street. The instant that he reached the highway, and was beyond observation and hearing, he unloosed his neck-kerchief, to let the air come to his neck, for its veins were swelling and heaving as if heated by an internal fire; and then throwing his arms about him as if to obtain more relief, he poured out upon the landlord of the "Farmers' Inn," and upon Charles, curses and maledictions that rivalled the fiends themselves; and it was not until he had walked the whole five miles necessary to reach the railroad station, that he was fairly self-possessed.

Dixon, on his arrival among his confederates, kept up the discipline necessary for the best execution of his plans. He would not allow them to appear much together in the street, nor would he, when observed, have much to say to them himself. It was not until ten o'clock at night, that they met in their sleeping room, and discussed their plans.

Dixon gave a graphic account of his adventures at Stoneyville, and was further enraged by his friends' laughter, as he detailed how the landlord, to use the deputy United States marshal's language, "hit him under the short ribs;" but the conclave finally concluded, that it would be a great thing gained, if it were possible, "to stake the landlord down, and give him a 'hundred,' before they carried off his nigger friend, Charles."

"And how far is Stoneyville from this place?" inquired the deputy marshal.

"Five miles," said Dixon, sententiously.

"Five miles!" repeated the marshal, pulling out an old watch; "why, Major Dixon," he continued, "it is now only eleven o'clock; we can get to Stoneyville by one, and take the nigger in his den, asleep, and be back in time for the three o'clock morning train."

"I know that," snarled Dixon, "I could go back alone to Stoneyville, and take him myself, and bring him here; but that isn't the thing,—I want a row,—I want some of them guessing Yankees to interfere; I want that landlord to get a rip with a bowie,—I want to make these fellows feel what it is to infringe on Southern rights.

The two men, whom Dixon had hired to accompany him, finally fell into a slumber, but the deputy marshal seemed a little nervous about his "official capacity," from the fact, that his commission seemed to him a profound delegation of terrible power, and he was constantly afraid that it would either be infringed upon, or not sufficiently exerted; so he kept wide awake, and continued in conversation with Dixon.

Now the major was exceedingly well skilled in his business, and he had inculcated the deputy marshal with the belief, that if he, the marshal, was successful in this "particular hunt," that he might get into a fine run of business, and soon make himself rich; and to further stimulate his confederate, Dixon gave several illustrations of the profits of fugitive hunting; but the story he told with most unction, ran as follows :—

"When I fust commenced this business, it was before the abolitionists had created such a fuss against the South, and before the slave States made the law, that a negro was free, if his master took him voluntarily into the northern States. The consequence was, that a great many gentlemen owned niggers, who had by travel got to be pretty considerable sort of gentlemen.

"A young man, by the name of Pinckney, who at about twenty-one, came in possession of a large estate, took it into his head to have in Europe a grand "spludge," so he took his body servant, Benson, about as white as niggers ever get to be, and started off. I think Benson told me that his master stayed abroad about ten years, and visited all the kings and queens, and courted duchesses, and all that sort of thing; Benson half the time passing for his companion, and all the time treated as if he was, no mistake, white.

"When Pinckney got back home again, he found his funds rather low; and having got a taste for cards and horses, he went down South, and commenced the genteel gambler, and figured on the race track; and it was generally given in, that if it hadn't been for Benson's smartness,

he'd a gone to the dogs in less time than it takes to brand a nigger.

"Now a race track, Mr. Deputy Marshal, is a bad place for fools,—a bad place for a man that loses his senses in drinking too much—I never do that,—and a bad place for a bird, any way, that is rather loose in his feathers. Be that as it may, Pinckney soon had fastened on him a shrewd man, who determined to get Benson from him, by fair means or foul; and so he stuck to him with "marked cards," and pisening his race horses, and bribing their riders, until Pinckney put up Benson against fifteen hundred dollars, and lost him on the race track, easier than a turtle rolls off a log.

"Now, the man that won Benson didn't live in a palace, or have any duchesses about him, I tell you. He occupied a log-cabin, eat corned pork, and amused himself drinking whiskey, running horses, and hunting niggers. He was a real spirited gentleman, but rather imprudent in whipping, for he used to lay it on when he got mad, so that the nigger never got over it, and that is a foolish wasting of property, for you see Mr. Deputy, there is no feeling in a nigger's hide below the skin, and if you will take time, you can get it all out of his body without touching a vital—but howsomever, the man had a right to kill 'em if he could afford to, for a person should do as he pleases with his own.

"As soon as this man won Benson, who stood by, dressed up in the very clothes he brought from France, and a gold watch in his pocket, he said very mildly: 'Benson, my boy, that half neck ahead of my horse as they came out

at the stand, made me your master; now I have a prejudice agin dandy niggers, agin learned niggers, and agin white niggers; and as I don't fancy the airs Mr. Pinckney puts on, I think I'll commence your education by whipping out of your hide all the gyrations he's larned you; and if you live through it, maybe you'll make a good cotton picker at last,' and as the winner said this, he commenced without further ceremony belting Benson with a heavy whip, every stroke of which cut the broadcloth into flinders.

"Now, Pinckney (who was drunk when he put up Benson as a stake, for he would have sacrificed his life for the boy had he been sober), seeing the man strike Benson, he drew a knife, and demanding how any one dared to strike *his* nigger, rushed in, and a general fight ensued; but as might be expected, the gamblers got the advantage, for they cut up Pinckney awful, so he died the next day, but the nigger disappeared, and wasn't seen afterwards.

"Now Benson understood that he had been lost on a bet, and determining not to go with his new master, the moment the fight commenced, he slipped out of sight, hid away in the woods, and hailed the first boat going to Cincinnati after he got to the Mississippi River, and was taken on board and treated all the way like a gentleman, no one on the boat even suspecting that he was a darkee, much less a runaway slave.

"Benson found his way of course to the British possessions, and if our government at Washington had any spunk, it would declare war on Canada, just to get the runaways; that's the way it sarved the Seminoles, and a very pretty thing we made of it. Benson once on English sile, set him-

self up for a gentleman at large, and as he could talk about crowned heads, picters and all that sort of nonsense, he was looked upon as the perlitest man ever was seen, and you'd scarcely believe it, set up a perfumery store and married an English woman, as handsome I'm told as any in the country."

The deputy marshal, who had listened up to this moment in profound silence; at the statement of the marriage, rolled up his eyes in astonishment, and said:—

"Oh, Major! You're going it too strong."

"Not a bit of it; for you see Benson was a white nigger, and it took a good judge to show the cross. I have," he continued, "paid a heap of money out to settle this very question of how white a nigger can be.

"'Twas only six years ago, I bought, near Richmond, for a friend of mine in Orleans, a real blue-eyed white nigger girl; and after I got her on the ship, a habeas corpus was got out, to prove she was clear white. Her lawyer took the ground that she was free—for, you see it was argued according to the Virginny statute, 'that every person who had one fourth negro blood should be deemed a nigger, and that every person who had less than that should have a certificate of being white. 'Twas a hard struggle for twenty hundred dollars, I tell you, for the man I bought the girl of, had taken the money and left.

"Fortunately the girl hadn't any education; she looked beautiful, and being only fifteen, was worth to a young fellow with plenty of money, three thousand as she stood, and as she couldn't plead her case, and didn't seem to care,—when I showed them that the inside of her hands was

a little smoother than ordinary white folks, and the dark line down the spine; the justice give in and I took her off; but for that, it would have been as good as losing six ordinary niggers, as things then stood.

"But as I was saying about Benson; he took to the perfumery business, and married a white wife, and got to be a great man in his way, I tell you. There he lived, not even his fellow-runaways suspecting that he had ever seen a slave State. But a Southern man, who had seen Benson on the race track, recognized him in Canada, and it got to my ears, and the first time I was down in Louisiana after I heard of his whereabouts, I bought out his master's interest for fifty dollars, and took a regular bill of sale.

"I expected to have a deal of trouble, if I ever got Benson at all, but he walked into the trap I set for him like a bumble-bee into a sugar hogshead. Just one letter, pretending to be from a New York merchant, that wanted to see him in Detroit, brought him under the American flag and into a pair of handcuffs."

"And what became of him at last?" asked the deputy marshal.

"Why," said Dixon, rising up and walking about the room, "as a mere money speculation, Benson turned out badly. I spent three hundred dollars to get him to St. Louis, and carried him gagged and tied all the way, and when I got him fairly in limbo, after all my trouble, he had the ingratitude to hang himself to the rafters, and so give me the slip after all."

"And what became of his wife?" asked the marshal with more interest than he had at any other time displayed.

"I don't know," said Dixon, with an equivocal smile on his face, "but I remember that the papers and the abolitionists at the time made a great deal of fuss about it, and said the woman went crazy; but the idea of a white woman going crazy for a nigger, was working the sentimental with too much steam on, and I never thought about the subject afterwards."

A few orders in the morning were given by Dixon, and the men walked rapidly on their way. At this moment you could scarcely distinguish the quiet story-teller of the previous night, with the man as he appeared under the growing excitement of making a capture. He seemed to be a head taller; there was an erectness about his figure, a fire in his eye, and an expression in his face that was really impressive, and he seemed to inspire his followers with his own defiant spirit.

The streets of Stoneyville, as the men entered at different points, were alive with children going to school, and with citizens on their way to their daily avocations. Dixon, always in sight of his fellow laborers, walked straight up to Charles's shop, and peeping in at the window, discovered the object of his search busily employed in dressing the hair of a reverend-looking gentleman. Raising his finger, the deputy marshal, white with fear and excitement, came within a few yards of him, while the hired assistants had reached stations near Dixon equidistant up and down the street.

The moment that every thing was ready, Dixon tapped on the door, and Charles, comb in hand, stepped forward and opened it, and as he put his head out, Dixon seized him

with his left hand by the collar and jerked him into the street, at the same instant striking him a stunning blow on his head with a heavy club.

The negro reeled, staggered against the side of the house, and fell on his knees.

"Where the hell are the handcuffs?" said Dixon to the deputy, while his other assistants rushed up, and according to instructions, with loud voices and imprecations warned the citizens, who were gathering round, not to interfere with the officers of the United States. The moment, however, that the iron touched Charles, he seemed to comprehend his situation, and ere the four men had succeeded in perfectly securing both of his wrists, with a herculean effort he broke his hold, and rising on his feet, the blood streaming down his forehead and cheeks, he dashed the dangling handcuffs in Dixon's face, broke from the grasp of his enemies, and amid a shower of bullets, and almost stripped of his clothing, ran a short distance and plunged into the deep but narrow river that flowed by the town. Dixon followed him to the river bank, the deputy marshal meantime waving his commission over his head, and calling on the people to assist him in carrying into effect the sacred laws of the land and stand by the constitution.

The firing of the pistols brought the whole population into the streets, at the head of which, and close to Dixon's heels, was the clergyman who was under Charles's professional care at the moment of the arrest. By the time the deputy marshal had finished his call upon the people to stand by the constitution, the clergyman had recovered from his astonishment and comprehended the scene before him,

and jumping upon an old horse-block near by, he said in a loud voice:—

"*Men and brethren, Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. The fugitive, he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him.*"

This appeal to the crowd was unnecessary, for no one had yet by word or deed offered to assist, or interfere with, the "officers of justice;" and the victim was momentarily out of sight; but he was soon discovered climbing up the timbers of the old dam, which once formed part of the ruined and neglected mill. The moment Dixon saw him he raised his revolver, and sang out:

"Come back here and surrender yourself, you infernal black d—l, or I'll make a honeycomb of your kinky brains; come here, I say,"—and at the same time Dixon fired one or two ineffectual shots.

"Gentlemen," continued the clergyman, "in the name of humanity,—in the name of our blessed Saviour,—have mercy!"

"Stand out of the way, you miserable, canting, abolition towhead!" fiercely denunciated Dixon, and with the side of his pistol-barrel rudely thrusting the clergyman away.

Charles meanwhile seemed to somewhat recover himself, and half walked and half crawled along the old dam, and got into the mill; and in a moment more, reached the

top, and passing out upon a long piece of naked timber, seemed for the instant to be suspended in the air.

"Now fire away, you human tigers!" he cried, shaking his manacled arm over his head; "I don't want to live any longer, since this disgrace has been put upon me. Fire away, I say!"

"Obey the laws of the United States, you treason-loving renegade," replied the deputy marshal, shaking his documents frantically towards Charles.

"God have mercy on the makers of such laws!" faintly murmured the fugitive, as his body swayed to and fro, and he fell headlong down; apparently striking against the projecting logs, and disappeared amid the singing, surging waters, that foamed and gurgled in the abyss below.

An exclamation of horror went up from the crowd, mingled with the cries of "shame! shame!" when Dixon turned coolly round to his assistants, and said:

"Dead niggers are not worth taking South, anyhow;" and replacing his revolver in his belt, he turned to the minister, now entirely petrified with horror, and reminded him that there was a funeral on hand, that demanded his attention.

Several men stripped themselves of their coats, and plunged into the river, and swam toward the mill; a feeling of bitter indignation began to show itself. Mr. Pendleton, Charles's old friend, asked of Dixon his authority for his acts, and then read with care the deputy's commission.

Threats now grew loud among the excited throng,

demanding that Dixon should be arrested; but he, with his companions, unmolested, retreated slowly, keeping at bay, and were soon out of sight, and for the moment forgotten in the excitement to learn the fate of Charles.

"Well," said Dixon to his companions, as he proceeded down the road, "we have seen more white livers to-day than would feed all the hounds in Texas. If four Northeners had come into a Southern town with a federal commission, or any other commission, and attempted to cut up the devil as we did to-day at Stoneyville, what would have been the effect?"

"Why," said the deputy promptly, "they'd a got ducked in the river, or rode out of town on a rail."

"They'd a got worse than that," said Dixon, with a leer; "Southern people would never stand by and see strangers serve a dog so! but these Yankees,—talk to 'em about the law, and show 'em a bowie or a pistol, and they wilt up like tobacco leaves touched with frost."

The negro, though nearly dead when found, seemed by a miracle to have escaped with life. His body lay bleeding, mutilated, and insensible,—not in the water, as was supposed, but among the matted logs. With difficulty he was restored to consciousness, and then only to rave about the manacle on his wrist, and express a desire to die.

Never was there before within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, so sad a day at Stoneyville. Citizens proverbially of the mildest and most unexcitable dispositions, seemed each hour to become more and more incensed, and were ready at any future occasion to resist by violence, all

laws where their execution involved such outrages as had been witnessed that day; and at nightfall, there went up from the firesides of Stoneyville, a deep and bitter denunciation of slavery.

In spite of every exertion of Mr. Pendleton, Dixon and his men got to the railroad station, and escaped without interruption; and one or two hours taking them beyond the jurisdiction of Vermont, they wended their way rapidly, and without fear, toward the protecting walls of the Federal Capitol.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUIET CLOSE OF DAY.

"MRS. MILDMAY" performed her simple duties as mistress of Heritage Place with due dignity. Provided with the best possible servants, her time passed on with little more real care than if she had been Miss Annie Hastings in her New England home. Mildmay took advantage of the pleasant mornings to engage with her in agreeable horseback rides through the splendid adjoining forests, and the evenings were passed in reading, or, as Annie herself observed, "appreciating the luxury of being in the open air."

The enervating character of the climate, however, had its effect upon her constitution, and she suffered at times that approach to indisposition which comes from extreme lassitude, and want of varied mental excitement. Confined sometimes to her room all day, at sunset she would cause Clemmy to move an easy chair upon the broad gallery of the house; and there she would sit and watch the stars, which, in a clear southern sky, seem to come rushing into existence, on the sudden disappearance of the sun in the west.

Mildmay, who had himself a keen sense of the beautiful in nature, as he was leaning one evening against the heavy columns, watching the close of day, heard the light footsteps, and turning round, he received Annie with a smile; and then assisting Clemmy in arranging her easy chair, and seeing that Annie was luxuriously buried in the soft cushions, and properly provided by an array of shawls as a reserved guard against the chilliness of approaching night, he seated himself nearly in front of her, and taking out his cigar-case, he ordered Prince to get him "a light;" and having done all this, he said:

"A few moments more, Annie, and you would have lost this brilliant sunset."

Prince instantly returned, bringing a living coal upon the prong of an ivory-handled fork; Graham blew off the mouldering ashes, and lit his delicate Havana: then assuming an easy attitude, he gave one puff, and said, "Thus, Annie, the aborigines dedicated the fragrance of the weed to their gods; I, more devout and more useful, shall let these fleeting clouds serve to destroy the mosquitoes, already singing round you."

"You are not the first enthusiast that, in making an offering, has given the fabled deities the least substantial part of the sacrifice," said Annie, rousing as if from a reverie.

"Well," exclaimed Graham, "if I were not so comfortable just now, and so determined not even to think, I might reply to your unorthodox remarks, regarding my disinterestedness."

"Then," returned Annie, "perhaps you will explain

to me the secret charm of that rude seat, so much a favorite; one would think it was made for very square, and very straight-backed people, judging from its 'form.'"

"There again," said Graham; "what a pampered girl; you eschew my compliments, and now question the integrity of my throne: surely, being half buried in the deep cushion folds of that old 'arm-chair,' makes one an egotist. But, my lady fair, yonder is a scene that can have naught but admiration!" and he pointed to the west.

The sun was now in the very effulgence of its departing glory, and reflected a warm orange tinge upon the face of Annie; giving her eyes, already softened by debility, a true sultana look. Behind her chair stood Clemmy,—her dark and good-natured features glistening like bronze; at Annie's feet, reposed Ponce de Leon; his eye, however, was ever vigilant, and seemingly eager to pick a quarrel with Clemmy for being so near his mistress. Mildmay had put on his college skullcap, the heavy tassel fastened to its top hanging nearly to his shoulder; his "*blouse*" was loose and flowing, while the smoke of his cigar curled lazily about his head. Prince had quietly slipped back to his place on the gallery, and went fast asleep.

"It is beautiful! very beautiful!" half whispered Annie, as she beheld the vast clouds rolling about, changing into a thousand hues, and leaving between the distant forms glimpses of distance, which seemed the openings to other worlds.

"And," continued Annie, with some animation, "see you not those vast ranges of almost zenith-reaching moun

tains, glistening in pink and gold; how they are melting, even while we gaze, into purple and blue?"

Mildmay looked at his wife with admiration, but made no reply.

"And," continued Annie, almost rising from her chair, "see you not those grand peaks, and precipitous sides, among which I fancy I can find the familiar forms of those old giant sentinels, that look out upon Malden?"

"True," half murmured Mildmay, buried in deep reflection; "there's the old blue ridge itself."

"What a pity, Mildmay," suggested Annie, respectfully, "that these rich lands of the South have not some granite hills to break up their sameness; I have a fancy that mountains cherish freedom of thought, as well as perfect health; is it not thus?"

"So records history," returned Mildmay, eyeing with anxious expression the placid appearance of Annie's face.

A few more flashes, and struggling of the god of day, and scarcely a tinge of his glory was left; the pleasant evening breeze now sprang up, and laughed among the hard crisp leaves of the magnolia trees.

And now might be seen moving quietly across the yard some living thing, scarcely perceptible in the dusk; on it comes, hesitatingly ascends the gallery stairs, and stopping at their head, stands, hat in hand, in statue-like silence.

Ponce de Leon is on his feet; he gives a slight growl of alarm, and appears ready for a defence or attack.

"Who's that on the gallery?" inquired Mildmay, without moving his head.

"It's Ben, if you please, master," replied the negro in a weak voice.

"And what is the matter with Ben?"

"Ize had de fever all day, and I feel sort o' weak in de legs," said the negro, without moving from his place.

"And what have you been doing all day, Ben?"

"Ize been log-rolling myself, but de gang was down in de cornfield cutting out grass."

"And how are they getting on, Ben?"

"Oh, bery well, master; 'em alers work when you come to see 'em."

"Well, Ben, go down and tell Judy, that I say she must give you something to make you well."

"Yes, master;" and "the boy" disappeared.

The climate of the South, and the influence of the "ancient population" of Louisiana, have unitedly created a demand, and a taste, for large and luxuriant sleeping apartments. Prominent among the articles of furniture are the *armoire*, and the *couch du lit*. The *armoire*, of massive proportions, is always composed of the richest of materials, and is very often inlaid with costly and different tinted woods, the panels are composed of costly mirrors that reach almost from the floor to the ceiling. In these receptacles one finds in bright array, not only the splendid ornaments of the bride, but in a provided place, repose the jewelled casket, the perfumed notes, the thousand cherished records of the inmost heart. The *couch du lit*, is formed of four ponderous posts, surmounted by a heavy canopy, from which depends the delicate but necessary mosquito netting. Underneath, is a couch, large enough

for giants, yet of more luxuriance than that on which Imogen reposed. The proud affection of Mildmay had surrounded Annie with all the elegant associations of the most favored of her sex, and many cherished mementoes of her New England home, mingled with the costlier appurtenances, and gave the charm of familiarity to all.

In one corner of the room, was a costly japan work-table, a present to Annie in her childhood, from a bachelor uncle, whose business it was to go down to the sea in ships. The grotesque figures upon this memento, of horrible dragons, swallowing beautiful young ladies with pigtails, and flowers of every possible hue, with gold leaves and red stalks, and birds flying through houses, and children running to waste in the air, had greatly amused Annie in her very youth, and in after years, had been the subject of much philosophic speculation—but now, nothing could so excite the tenderest emotions of her heart, as the sight of those oriental absurdities—made familiar and sanctified by so many pleasing associations.

If Annie was ever overpowered by the heat and languor of the day, or felt the influence of those moments of despondency that will at times come over the happiest of human hearts; it was only while leaning upon this table, that the consoling influence of tears came to her relief; and alike soothed and strengthened, would she leave this domestic shrine.

Clemmy, concluding her supper and her gossiping in the kitchen, returned to the gallery where she busied herself in setting back the chairs, closing the window blinds,

and other almost nameless but necessary duties, when, according to her wont, she went into her mistress's room.

Now Clemmy had, on the afternoon of this particular day, rendered herself exceedingly useful in the flower garden, which labor had caused her to neglect her household duties, and she now, after lighting a wax candle, and placing it under a tall glass shade, discovered the omission of drawing the mosquito netting.

Proceeding leisurely to remedy this neglect, with the instinctive feeling of reverence for things tasteful, so peculiar to negroes, she with more than usual care removed the ruffled pillows, and then carefully folded back the fine linen of snowy whiteness over the rose-tinted counterpane; then replacing the pillows at the head of the bed, she seized the silken tassel pendent from the foot of the tester, and gave the bar a jerk, that instantly expanded it like a delicate cloud over the couch beneath—and tucking in the edges of the bar, she next arranged the different vases, baskets, and nicknacks, according to her ideas. Then with evident pettishness she removed Annie's Bible to the mantelpiece, and replaced it by a magnificently bound volume, which was lying open upon the *lounge*—she then stepped into the centre of the room and gave an admiring glance; every thing in the room met with her perfect approbation; but the disposition of the gayly bound volume on the japan table was her master conception.

The night air growing too cool, and the nine o'clock bell at the quarters having an hour before rung; Annie rose from her seat in the gallery, moved toward the door leading into the house, while Mildmay pleading some busi-

THE QUIET CLOSE OF DAY.

ness matter with Toadvine, left Annie to pursue her inclinations by herself.

Clemmy was within hearing, but evidently from a perfect understanding, she continued staring into vacancy, as if no one was near, leaving Annie to proceed uninterrupted to her room. The young mistress wore a quiet and satisfied expression, there was a slight tinge of pleasure warming up her cheek, it was evident that the evening had been agreeably spent. On entering as if performing a customary task, she carefully returned her Bible to its appointed place, leaving the favorite binding of Clemmy to ignobly repose its splendor upon the brass nails of one of Mildmay's much worn travelling trunks. Annie then sat down beside her little table, and for some moments leaned her head upon her hand; then, with her costly handkerchief she listlessly brushed away some suppositious dust from the faces of numerous little Japanese monsters, and taking up the sacred volume, she turned to a specific place, buried her forefinger among the parted leaves, and seemed for a while to be musing over the events of the day; then opening the volume she read, in a low and musical voice, the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke, and throwing herself upon her knees, poured forth her soul in spontaneous prayer to Heaven, calling down blessings upon her friends at a distance, near by, her husband and herself.

Annie had scarcely risen from her kneeling position, before Clemmy slipped noiselessly into the room, and with some officiousness prepared to assist her mistress in her toilet for the night. Annie would willingly have dispensed with this, but the natural kindness of her own heart would

not allow her to repel Clemmy's affectionate zeal; she therefore kindly received from her hands the snowy *robe de nuit*, and carefully adjusting it, and placing her comb on the table, thereby leaving her luxuriant hair to fall over her shoulders, she with forced resignation abandoned herself to the hands of her faithful domestic.

Clemmy was now happy; it was the honor of arranging those magnificent curls, that was the pride of her existence, and made her the envy of all her fellow servants. Annie herself could not help being amused, as she discovered the sable face of admiration and triumph reflected over her shoulder in the glass.

Clemmy skilfully swept away the masses of curls from Annie's brow, which transformed her loveliness into a simplicity that would have been commended by the most rigid puritan of her race. The labor ended, she roused herself, and stepped toward the bed.

Clemmy, meantime, had seized her gigantic fly brush, in which glistened and waved the rich plumage of a host of Juno's birds, and swinging it in the air, made a soft zephyrous noise, and at the same time, in the most artistic manner she prepared to lift the edge of the mosquito bar, gave the signal, and Annie sprang through the opening with a bound.

The busy hum of myriads of insects, thus, by almost necromancy, cheated of their prey, but made the protection of the netting more deliciously secure, and Annie was soon wandering in that mysterious world, where things past and present, and already realized hopes, mingle in incongruous yet most harmonious combination.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ORDER DISOBEYED.

As with all wealthy planters, the most perplexing care to Mildmay, was the management of the overseer. To this individual, the proprietor has to delegate immense authority, and yet the very qualities essential for an overseer, almost necessarily suppose, that he will not, and cannot be a refined and responsible man. Mildmay had his share of difficulties after Fenwick left him, but he at length employed a "Mr. Toadvine," who could command readily in the neighborhood a liberal salary, and was well recommended. Mildmay, upon concluding his agreement with Toadvine, gave him some general instructions, proscribing on his place the use of a certain kind of whip, and incidentally mentioning, that if Jack, one of the "field hands," should at any time need correction, he desired that it would not be administered without his, Mildmay's, knowledge.

Some months after Toadvine was installed in his office, the unexpected announcement, by Mr. Mildmay, that business would call him away from home for two or three days, caused a feeling of universal gratulation in the mind of the

overseer, and the very morning on which he saw from his station in the field, that Mildmay had departed on his journey, he returned to his house at the head of "the quarters," and taking down the "proscribed lash," he carefully and artistically proceeded to soften its material, and by repeated twistings, wringings, and drawing it through his tightly grasped hand, he brought it at last to a satisfactory state of toughness and pliability. Then rising up and going out of doors he whirled it around his head, and taking deliberate aim at a cypress splinter, nearly the size of his little finger, that obtruded from the boards of the fence, he cut it off with the end of the lash, as smoothly as if it had been done with the edge of his bowie-knife; he then playfully singled out fair surfaces on the side of his cabin, and impressed upon them at each blow, various hieroglyphic characters with his whip, and although no particular effort was made, he buried the snapper deeply into the somewhat time-softened wood.

"I reckon that'll do," at last muttered the aggrieved man, "that'll do,—I'll teach Mr. Mildmay that niggers is niggers, and that he can't come back here from the free States with his damn'd infernal abolition notions, and interfere in my business. If any of his hands 'aint got thar share of whipping 'fore night it'll be no fault of mine."

Just at that moment, the front gate of the quarter inclosure opened, and in rode "Col. Price," the overseer of the "Morcton estate." Toadvine saluted his friend, asked him to dismount, and they both entered the house.

"I came over," said Price, "to ask you to let me have the timber wheels; I think of going into the swamp this

evening for saw-logs, and Mr. Mildmay told me 'fore he left that I could get 'em if not in use."

"It's a wonder," snarled out Toadvine, "that Mr. Mildmay did any thing of the kind. He's been in Connecticut so infarnally long, that I didn't believe he would do a favor."

"Why, what's turned your hair the wrong way this morning?" inquired Col. Price, with considerable interest.

"Why, jist this," said Toadvine," "you see I've been overseer here too long to be interfered with by any man, and I won't stand it. *Mister* Mildmay can't teach me my business, and he shan't tell me I whip too much or too little. It's only yesterday he made me let Monday up, and I had'nt cut his hide in nary place!"

"There is one thing that'll never do," said Col. Price; "one thing 'll never do, and that is, to let employers interfar too much in our business. My notion is, 'let me be head or tail, or nothink.'"

"Them's the way I think," half soliloquized Toadvine, drawing his huge whiplash through his fingers; "them's the way I think, and unless we do something to let these upstarts know who's who, 'taint unlikely we may get down to be thought as little of as a schoolmaster or a preacher."

"Not as bad as that!" said Col. Price, in a tone of voice that showed that he never thought that such a respectable office as overseer could possibly be degraded by connection with such professions; "no, no, not so bad as that," and rousing himself up, he drove his fist into the table, and looking around in a great excitement, he said,

"he would like to see a living man that would dare to mistake *him* for a schoolmaster or a preacher."

Toadvine, who had cruelty enough in his composition to make two Col. Prices, lacked that military gentleman's courage in the expression of his sentiments; so he deeply regretted that he had made even the improbable comparison that had given his friend offence, and getting up from his seat he went to a rude sideboard, and unlocking it, he took out a decanter of raw whiskey, and setting a broken tumbler and a teacup upon the table, he suggested to Col. Price the propriety of taking something to help out his breakfast."

"That's very good liquor," said Price, smacking his lips, "whar did you come across it?"

"Well, don't you know it, easy," suggested Toadvine, putting the decanter up to Price's nose, "don't you know the smell?"

"Upon my word," said Price, drawing in his breath, as if inhaling the perfume of a moss rose, "upon my word, old Gen. Blatherskite's 'electioneering tour,' as the central committee called it; how did you have so much? thought it all went at the 'Clay gut precinct.'"

"Why, you see," said Toadvine, "I sent word to the General, that if he expected to get the vote of this neighborhood, he had better send up a bar'l of something to drink, and he sent word he'd do it; he said that the 'South was in danger,' and he'd do any thing *but bribe*, to get to Congress. I sent after the bar'l the very morning of the day it was wanted, by lazy Jim, and would you believe it, the

whiskey didn't get here *till night*," and Toadvine assumed a look of innocence and regret.

"And so," said Price, helping himself to another glass, "you had the whole left on your hands?"

"Nuthen else," chuckled Toadvine, and, as if unable to restrain himself longer, and either from the effect of the liquor, or the remembrance of the trick he played upon a candidate for Congress, he kicked his heels in the air and laughed until the tears came in his eyes.

"But didn't the General smell a rat?" inquired Price, in a deprecating voice, "didn't he find out how you fixed it?"

"Not a bit of it," said Toadvine, "for I saw the General coming down the road the next day, so I staked down lazy Jim by the side of the fence, and commenced on him just as the General rode up. The nigger hollered "Oh, lord, Massa Toadvine, have mercy!' 'Yes,' said I, not noticing the General, 'I'll have mercy, you infernal scoundrel, for delaying on the road yesterday with that whiskey. I'll teach you to fool away your time, when you are on Gen. Blatherskite's business."

"'On whose business?' said the General, reining up his horse, and looking astonished; 'are you flogging that nigger on my account, Mr. Toadvine?'"

"'Yes, General,' said I, looking very angry, 'this nigger was sent for the whiskey, to treat your friends at "Clay gut," and he managed to get back after the voting was over.'"

"'Well, never mind!' said the General, 'just keep it to drink my health with!' and he rode away; but whar was

the difference?" said Toadvine, speculatively; "you know, the General got the licker on tick, and he'd challenge any man that sent him a bill."

At this point in the conversation, a tall, likely-looking negro was seen approaching the house, from the field; he carried his hoe jauntily across his shoulder. In coming into the surrounding inclosure, he was obliged to pass through a gate, always placed near the overseer's dwelling.

"Whar you going?" said Toadvine; and springing into the yard, and whirling his whip over his head, he brought it down on the negro's back, simultaneous with his question, "whar you going, you black devil? did I not tell you to stay in the field?"

"Master James," said the negro, with humility, mixed with astonishment, while still writhing under the pain of the blow; "I cum'd home because Mistress wanted I to clar up de yard, you knows I wouldn't leave de gang, 'cept on permission."

"I knows nothing of the kind," sneered Toadvine, in the negro's face; "I know nothing, except that you are a sneaking, skulking scoundrel; but I'll catch you, my man,—I'll catch you! and by the ———, if I get a chance at your hide, I'll peel you cleaner than you ever did a possum! now go and clear up the yard;" and Toadvine struck at the boy again; but with surprising agility Jack avoided the blow, and disappeared.

"There's insurrection for you," snarled out Toadvine, in a perfect fit of rage, at the same time storming up and down the yard; "there's a nigger that his master says I

mustn't whip, and he takes advantage of it, to defy me to my face."

Price looked on coolly, apparently uninterested; at any rate he expressed no surprise, but let Toadvine exhaust himself, in giving wordy expressions to his feelings; and then, from a wild flower growing near by, with a well aimed mouthful of tobacco juice, he knocked a bumble-bee on the ground, and spoke as follows:—

"Toadvine, circumvent that nigger; just teach him you are a warmer friend to him than his master. Don't strike him, as you did just now, in anger, and without a cause,—have a reason, and then work at his hide, like a saw-mill."

"But I can't get a reason," said Toadvine, groaning under his impotency; "he won't give me half a chance."

"Well, make a chance," whined out the sapient Colonel. "You know 'fore I come to Moreton's, I overseed for old Captain Berks; well, you see Berks hadn't any but old family niggers, as he called 'em,—and one, that nussed him when he was a boy, he was particularly nice of—that was a nigger, sure; why hog and hominy was too good for him. 'Now,' said old Berks to me, said he, "Colonel Price, that boy I have know'd ever since I was a child; he carried me 'bout 'fore I could walk, and saved me from drowning at ten years old. That nigger,' continued Berks, 'cut the fust stick on this yere plantation, and he mustn't be whipped, on no account.'

"Old Berks hadn't been to Connecticut to school, when he gave that order," continued Price, winking knowingly at Toadvine; "'twarn't done for fear, neither, for

old Berks wasn't to be sceared; but it was jest done because old Jeff could fool his master, and I know'd it; so things went on very well, until I couldn't sleep contented, until I took a little concait out of Jeff; but for a reason.

"One night we was weighing cotton, and up walked Big Bill, a thick-lipped scoundrel as there was on the place; he put his basket on the scales, and, by the hokey, it went over three hundred. 'Well done!' said old Berks, in ecstasy, 'well done, Big Bill; and now,' said the old man, sort of funny like, 'as you have picked fifty pounds more than usual, you can call at the store room, and get a pair of shoes.' Big Bill laughed—old Berks laughed—and I stuck my hand into the cotton basket, and pulled out two water-melons, weighing 'bout thirty-nine pounds.

"At this," continued Price, rubbing his hands in glee, and giving the poor bumble-bee another shower of tobacco juice, "at this, old Berks, who was a 'little tight,' got into a passion; he swore such ungenerous and outrageous conduct, on the part of his niggers, would break his heart, and if I didn't give Big Bill 'forty,' he would dismiss me from the place, and administer the medicine himself.

"So said I, pretending to be hurt with his severity, said I, 'Captain Berks, them's family niggers.' 'I don't care,' shouted the old man (the brandy, I think, getting the upper hand of him); 'I don't care, family or no family; a fellow that would swindle on one side, and rob my melon patch on the other, shall be flogged. I'd tie up *Jeff* thar, much as I think of him,' said Berks, 'if he'd do such a thing.' 'You would,' said I, pretending to be astonished. 'Yes, I would,' said old Berks, towering; 'if you ever

catch Jeff trying to palm off a water-melon for seed-cotton, give *him* forty.'"

As Price concluded this interesting story, he deliberately walked past Toadvine, who was standing, a perfect monument of mystified surprise, and, mounting his horse, appeared as if he was thus unceremoniously going to ride away.

"And what about Jeff?" finally asked the perplexed and rather dull overseer.

"Oh nothing," replied Price, carelessly, "only the next night, *thar was a water melon in Jeff's basket*, and every nigger on the place see'd it, and he *was* given 'forty,' and I think it tuck him six weeks to get out of the hospital."

Toadvine, as he watched the retreating form of his friend, Colonel Price, seemed suddenly inspired with unusual spirits; he cracked his whip in scientific flourishes, and going into his cabin, he stuck a loaded pistol in his belt, took a drink of whiskey, locked up the decanter, and remarking, "that Colonel Price is smart, and that water-melon trick was beautiful," he mounted his shaggy pony, and was soon lost in the distance, as he rode towards the slave gang, at work in the field.

As Col. Price reached the main road on his way home, he came up with a small, sandy-faced, light-haired man, mounted on a "creole pony," and followed by five or six fierce-looking hounds; a double-barrelled gun was balanced before him, and he carried in his hand a raw-hide whip.

"How do you do, Stubbs?" said the colonel, riding

up, and shaking hands with the man, "whar you going to-day?"

"Just nosing about," said Stubbs, whipping off one or two dogs, that would occasionally show their teeth at Col. Price's nether limbs.

"Who's got any niggers out, now?" continued the Colonel, for he took a great interest in Stubbs's occupation.

"Enough out," replied Stubbs, "but no 'rangement made for catching 'em. I'm done," he continued, "a fetching runaways home, just for jail fees; 'twont keep up my pack, and pay expenses."

"That's right, Stubbs!" said the Colonel, looking approvingly on his friend; "that's right! if these rich planters won't 'antee up,' dont help 'em, that's my notion; but who's that ahead?" asked Price, as he discovered a young person on horseback, waiting in the road.

"That's young Finch," said Stubbs, without showing any surprise; "that boy," he continued, "does take more interest in a nigger hunt than my dogs do, and he's just waiting thar, until I come up, in hopes that he can see a 'brush.'"

Price and Stubbs shook hands with Finch, a youth perhaps of fourteen, who was armed not only with a gun, but had a bowie knife sticking ostentatiously out of his breast. A little general conversation ensued, when Stubbs and Finch, opening a plantation gate, bade Col. Price "good day," and commenced trotting through the "cotton rows" towards the dark cypress swamps, that loomed up, like mountains in the distance.

"And what do you think, Stubbs, will be our chance

of starting up something this evening?" asked young Finch, at the same time impatiently urging on his horse.

"Bad, very bad," said Stubbs; "none is out in this range now, but Busteed's old Phil; the fact is," said Stubbs, reining up his horse, "my dogs has got such a scear on the niggers now, that they won't run away,—the overseer has only to say, 'Now boys, if I cotch any of you leavin' you'll have Stubbs' dogs after you,' and that ends the thing. I ought to get a big price for doing that," suggested Stubbs, conscious that he was the victim of unrewarded merit.

"And how did you know, Stubbs, that old Phil was in the brake?" inquired the young man.

"'Cause I saw him yesterday, while 'still hunting;' come right on him, turned up on his back, sound asleep."

"And why didn't you make him go home?" asked the lad, with some asperity.

Now Stubbs had been led into an unfortunate remark, which he perceived the instant he had spoken, for he affected only to use his dogs when all other means of capture had failed; and he was afraid that Finch would get an idea that such was not the case; so he assumed a familiar air, and explained himself as follows:—

"You see, Charley, I was a 'still-hunting,' as I said, and looking for deer, and in wading Turtle Creek, for I was a-foot, you mind, I got my powder wet, and what could I do with such a fellow as Phil, if he had a mind to resist? No, no, Charley, I'm more careful than to track runaways, 'cept I 'am prepared,' so I tuck the best course I could, marked his den, and when he hears the 'barkers' after

him, he'll run straight home, sound as a nut, and no harm done to any body."

"That was very considerate," said young master Finch, evidently much flattered by Stubbs' manner; "it was very considerate indeed, and I think Busteed should be very much obliged to you."

"To be sure he should!" echoed Stubbs, "and all the planters should; why, sir, but for me, the swamps would be as full of niggers as they is of wild hogs. I get badly paid for my sarvices, Mr. Finch, considerin' I have to feed my own dogs, and take the risks I run."

"And what risks do you run?" inquired young Finch, carelessly patting his spirited little horse on the neck, and giving his gun a juster balance, as it rested before him on the pommel of the saddle.

"Why, a heap of risks," said Stubbs, with the air of an injured man; "do you suppose that the niggers can be tuck, and nothing to do but say, 'If you please, Mr. Darkee, your master wants you hum?' Oh, no! I've known shooting and slashing going on afore now, that would hurt any man's feelins."

"And where was that?" inquired young Finch, with greedy interest.

"Why you see," said Stubbs, "that two or three years agone, old Duckeye, that's a preacher now, and Bill Blass as was, afore he died, both kept dogs,—well, once they were out huntin', and it seems their packs closed in on the same nigger,—I'm told that their cry was beautiful, when, as they say at camp-meetin', they met, and jined their voices in harmonious song; but Blass's hounds had

the heels; they was of the old 'Ryder stock,' and they just run over Duckeye's dogs, and left them in the rear. I think the nigger they was arter belonged to old Gray; he could scratch gravel, that nigger, and double, and turn, like any fox,—the chase was beautiful. Now, as might be supposed, Blass's pack drew the fust blood, and had the nigger down, when Duckeye's dogs come up.

"The row was tremendous, and they would have sent the nigger to kingdom cum, if the dogs, being strangers, had not got to fighting among themselves. There was a hullaboloo, sure enough; I was on the spot the next day, and the palmetto was smoothed down for a half acre, whar the fight was. While the dogs was going it among themselves, and the darkee was crying and yelling, old Duckeye and Blass got to quarrelling about who caught the nigger; Blass contendin', as was right, that as his dogs gin the first grab, the nigger was his. Duckeye stuck out that his dogs was fust to find the trail, so the nigger was his,—and so they got to swearing and scrimmaging, and tucking into each other their bowies, and yelling and cursing, the the dogs fell on 'em both, and such a row ensued as never was afore.

"In this beautiful difficulty, the nigger got clean off, and Blass got stobbed in the side, and died that 'ere very night; and so you see, Mr. Finch, that the infernal runaways *is* dangerous. I often think of Blass!" said Stubbs, mournfully, "for you see," wiping his eyes with his coat sleeve, "that that 'ere dog thar, with the blood-shot eyes, was own nephy to Blass's Cuba, raised and imported, Santy Christy, as Blass called him."

"Well, that was surprising," said young Finch, looking with admiration at the dog, that had such a distinguished uncle; and at the same time somewhat confounded by the conglomeration of Stubbs' story; "but how was it," he inquired, "that Duckeye got off from the ——" and Finch hesitated to give a name to the deed pictured in his mind.

"—— the stobbing," said Stubbs. Finch nodded yes to the suggestion, and Stubbs went on—"you see the grand jury had Duckeye up, two or three times, but whar was the witnesses; it was agin the law to use the dogs and the niggers to swar agin a white man in court, so the matter drapped."

At this moment the two horsemen and their canine followers entered the thick woods, and in course of the fleeting hour, Busteed's old Phil was roused from his lair, and there were to be heard the sharp ringing notes of the open-mouthed pack, as they engaged in "the spirit stirring hunt."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROMISED VISIT.

Mildmay and Annie set out for Mr. Moreton's, soon after breakfast; the day was so fine, that it was agreed that the journey should be made on horseback, and that on the way, Annie should ride through the plantation, and gratify her wishes at the sight of her husband's luxuriant fields.

At the time of starting, the little negroes, who had come in from "the quarters," arranged themselves in a row along the avenue of the lawn, and as Annie passed, they bowed their comical-looking heads, and said, "Goo' by, Mistress!" "Goo' by, Master!" and then, as if overcome with their familiarity, they gave a universal laugh, and went trooping off behind the house, Ponce de Leon, with a half malicious, and half mischievous spirit, knocking a majority of them over on the green sward, by joining in the scramble.

Meanwhile Governor had opened the gate, and Mildmay and Annie passed through, and pursued their way down the road, the servant following at a respectful dis-

tance in the rear. Scarcely had this been accomplished, before Ponce de Leon, having finished his gambols with the negro children, discovered the cavalcade moving away without him. With a rush that would have done honor to a race-horse, he sped across the lawn, and fairly flew over the palings, and in another moment, was barking and coquetting around Annie's horse.

"I will be more careful hereafter, Ponce," said Annie, laughing, and glancing at her favorite, "how I let you into my secrets; for, do you know," she said, looking at Mildmay, "that I believe some dogs have the quality of intelligence."

"There cannot be a doubt of it," he returned, interested with the suggestion, "and there is nothing to disprove that they may not even have a future, though still humble existence."

"You have improved, Graham, amazingly, upon my speculation," said Annie gayly.

"Perhaps so, but you will admit that there is something truly poetical in the wild dream of the American aborigine, where he spiritualizes his future existence; no heathen mythology has given us a purer and more attractive picture than the Indian and his dog, side by side, in the happy hunting-grounds."

"True, very true," returned Annie, "and more's the pity, that so noble a race could not be preserved by civilization."

"Pity indeed, but it is impossible to preserve the Indian. In the wild woods, and away from artificial influences, he flourishes like these mighty forest trees, through

which we wind our way; but like these trees, if transplanted or disturbed by cultivation, must wither away."

"It's a sad picture," said Annie, thoughtfully; "but," she added, "I like their consistency after all, for with the Indian it is indeed 'liberty or death.'"

"Hurrah," said Mildmay, with playful exultation, "hurrah for Annie Hastings! who, though so little, is so very brave; she will yet be the mother of heroes."

"I will beat you in a fair race to the field gate," said Annie, blushing, and pushing her heretofore lingering palfrey into a gallop, away she sped, Mildmay gallantly following just in the rear, with Ponce de Leon, crazy with excitement, far in the van.

As the equestrians came up to the inclosure, Jack, who had seen them approaching, was at the gate to open it, and as the party passed in, he gave them a salute of genuine feeling, which Annie said "was delightful to behold."

"You can shut up de gate yousef," said Jack, as Governor, with an air intended to be much more impressive than his master's, was about riding on, unheeding his sable fellow-servant.

"Oh sartin," said Governor, wheeling round his pony, and giving the gate a swing that sent it to with a crash; and then turning to Jack a look of assumed contempt, he remarked:—

"Some indiwiduals don't suppose that field darkies can learn to open and shut a gate at de same time,—it would be too much for dis world," and Governor was so delighted with his own wit, that he nearly fell off of his horse from laughing.

"Mabee not," said Jack, seizing his hoe and working away furiously in the soft ground; "mabee not," he repeated, his face brightening into a broad grin, and then without any conceivable reason, except an exuberance of animal spirits, he broke into a guffaw, not only louder than Governor's explosion, but so terrific, that it set the crows flying at the time high over head, cawing with alarm.

At this moment a little negress passed by with a pail of water on her head, which she was carrying to the gang in the field. Mildmay filled the gourd that was floating on the top, and offered it to Annie, which she playfully refused.

"I see, Annie," said Mildmay, most liberally helping himself, "that you cannot get accustomed to a gourd,—but, according to my ideas, it is the only goblet that truly accords in simplicity with the gently gurgling spring."

The sun, as it rose higher in the heavens, began to pour down with intensity, and Mildmay, perceiving that Annie was suffering from the heat, suggested more rapid progress, and the two struck into a "lope," which was continued for a long distance without interruption.

Upon reaching their destination, it was a grateful relief to receive the protecting shade of the heavy walls and overhanging verandahs of the mansion.

Mrs. Moreton met Annie with unusual pleasure marked upon her face, and Aunt Margaret was so delighted, that she not only shook both her hands affectionately, but kissed her on her cheek.

The children, with their nurses, presented themselves one after another, and it seemed to Annie, in the confusion,

that a child and a negro were so strangely identified, that it was difficult to imagine them apart.

"Let us have some water here," said Mr. Moreton, looking about generally, after himself and Mildmay had seated themselves, and the ladies had retired to a distant part of the house.

Now Mildmay was exceedingly thirsty, and so appeared Mr. Moreton; but although there were great numbers of negroes moving about the premises, presenting themselves and then disappearing like puppets in a show, still no water came. Finally Mr. Moreton lost all patience, and with a loud voice cried out:

"John—David—Mary—Jefferson—Wash, why don't somebody bring some water here?"

Still the negroes moved about, as if unconscious of hearing any order, and Mr. Moreton jumped up, and was about getting into a passion, when Aunt Margaret met him at the door, and in a mild voice said:

"Brother, did I hear you call?"

"Certainly you did," said Mr. Moreton, sitting back in his chair nearly exhausted.

Aunt Margaret singled out one of the many idlers in view, and gave the required directions, and almost instantly she was obeyed.

"I forgot to ask you, Mr. Mildmay," said Moreton, taking up his glass, "I forgot to ask if you would have any thing with your water. I have myself so long given up the habit of indulging in any thing 'strong,' with the temperate exceptions of occasionally at dinner, that I fear I have appeared regardless of the rites of hospitality."

"Not at all," said Mildmay promptly, "I have, I am sorry to say, formed a liking for a good cigar, which desire I gratify, but beyond that, I am careful not to tax my strength by unnecessary stimulants."

"Bring some cigars here," cried Mr. Moreton from habit, and then catching the eye of the servant holding the salver and pitcher, he said:

"Viney, bring those cigars here, from off the parlor mantel-piece."

The girl obeyed, and presented Mildmay with the box, but he declined smoking for the time being, and the two gentlemen again seating themselves, seemed disposed to enter upon conversation, as persons who had a great deal to say, and more than sufficient time to say it in.

Annie was shown to a room splendid in size, in the centre of which was an enormous French bedstead, and on the side the familiar armoire. A tidy-looking, petted servant stood at her elbow, ready to do her slightest bidding. Laying aside a coquettish sun-bonnet, which she preferred to use in the middle of the day, when out on horseback, to the more showy riding cap that Mildmay had provided her with, she sat down in a comfortable chair, and submitted to the ordeal of examination from the distended eyes of her sable attendant.

"What's your name?" said Annie to the girl, to relieve herself from the embarrassment of being an object of so much undisguised interest.

"My name is Violet, Missus."

"Violet?" repeated Annie; "you were named after a

very pretty flower," she continued, absolutely confused for something to say.

"Not after a flower, Missus," said Violet, quite flattered by the notice she received; "I was done named after Master's old nurse."

At this moment the door of the room opened and Aunt Margaret presented herself, and with a winning smile she desired Annie to go with her to Mrs. Moreton's room.

Mrs. Moreton, at the moment of Annie's entrance, was giving directions to a negress how to sew up a seam in a coarse *capote* or blanket coat, and near by on the floor, sat two more negresses busy at the same work.

After the cordial salutations of meeting, "You see, Mrs. Mildmay," said Mrs. Moreton, "one of the tasks imposed upon the mistress of a plantation. You would scarcely believe," she continued, "that I have cut out and superintended the making of thirty of these heavy garments this season."

"Thirty!" said Annie, with undisguised amazement: "and can you, Mrs. Moreton, with your delicate hands, do so much?"

"It would seem so," said that lady, looking up and smiling; "I wish this work was the least unpleasant of my many duties."

"Well," said Annie, "as I am ambitious to be a good wife, I must learn to make them myself," and she took one of the heavy coats in her hands.

"Not to-day," said Aunt Margaret, taking the garment gently away, "not to-day, but some other time."

"I will show you presently," said the lady, still oc-

cupied by her duties, "Mr. Moreton's preparations for weaving and spinning; he finds such labor very useful and profitable for the women on a large plantation who are too delicate to be out in rainy days."

"And do you really spin and weave?" said Annie, with interest.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Moreton, and she added, "Clotilde, show Mrs. Mildmay your dress." (The girl held out the side of her garment for Annie's inspection.) "We," she continued, "clothe all our hands in homespun; it is much better cloth than that which we buy."

"And is this the universal custom?" said Annie, becoming very much interested.

"Most generally," said Mrs. Moreton, "in old settled communities."

At this moment there burst through the curtains that hung over the door a little girl, crying out, "Where's Aunt Margy?" and spinning round the room like a top, and running against tables and chairs, she came to a stand still, directly opposite where Annie was sitting.

"Why, Toots," said Aunt Margaret to the child, "where have you been this last half hour?"

"Down to the cotton-gin,—see all the corn-mill, and mules, and the wheels go round and round, and never stop 'till a minute," replied Toots, with a rapidity of speech truly astonishing.

"Do take that little minx out of the room, Minnie," said Mrs. Moreton, looking at one of the negro girls near her; "for that child always sets me crazy with her noise."

"Toots won't set any body crazy with her noise,—she

will be a good girl, and be 'till,—not do nossin at all;" and having delivered herself of this speech, Toots commenced dancing up and down, singing with a loud voice, each time her little feet struck on the floor.

It was very plain that Aunt Margaret was delighted, and as Toots for a moment was still, she said,

"Go and shake hands with Mrs. Mildmay, Toots."

The little perpetual-motion eyed Annie for a moment with amusing interest, and then with the quickness of thought rushed forward, jumped into Annie's lap, threw her arms round her neck, and said,

"How you get such curls all down your face?—how you come to our house?—how much you love Toots?" and the little thing clapped her hands and laughed, and crowed in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

"Why," said Annie, overcome with astonishment and gratified surprise, "does this child go on this way all the time?"

"Yes, all the time," said Mrs. Moreton, dwelling on the *all;* "and I believe she is never still, even when asleep."

"Toots very 'till," said the child with much solemnity; and she then broke out a loud chirrup, as follows.

"If I had a vife, and she had a baby,
Vife's name Kitty, child's name Gavy."

"Davy," said Aunt Margaret, her eyes sparkling with delight.

"Gavy," said Toots, with gravity.

"Davy,—goose," repeated Aunt Margaret.

"Vife's name Kitty, and child's name Davy Goose," said Toots, breaking into a loud laugh, and throwing her head back on Annie's shoulder.

"Minnie, take Toots out in the yard, I say," said Mrs. Moreton, putting her hand to her forehead, as if suffering from a severe pain in the head.

"No, Minnie shan't take Toots," said the child, springing from Annie's lap, and running to Aunt Margaret; "Toots set dog on Minnie, and Pa'll give Minnie 'forty,' —and then Toots broke out into an unintelligible song, mingled with imitations of all the noises heard in the poultry-yard; and finding that her mother was really getting serious, she suddenly calmed down, and walking up to one of the negro girls that was at work on the capotes, she said,

"Toots want needlers,—Toots show;" and having been accommodated with a needle and thread, she went through the pantomime of biting off the end of the thread, making a knot, and looking seriously at every one about her; but finding it impossible to remain quiet, she commenced dancing up and down, and just as her mother was within an inch of seizing her dress, she glided away, and was heard paddling down stairs, laughing, hallooing, at the, as she supposed, really ineffectual attempts of one of the servants to arrest her progress.

Annie was so amused at Toots, that, in spite of herself, she was obliged to give way to hearty laughter.

"Oh," said Mrs. Moreton, laying down her work, and looking at Annie with a most injured expression, "if you

could really imagine how difficult it is to exist with that child in the house, you would pity me."

"Why," said Annie, wiping tears from her eyes, "Mrs. Moreton, you are indeed to be *pitied*, for I think Toots would even kill me."

"I'll go and see that that dear child has something to eat," said Aunt Margaret, leaving the room; and upon going down stairs, she found Toots running across the lawn, with a piece of poundcake in one hand, and a stick in the other, chasing a large number of awkward goslings head-over-heels before her.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVERY-DAY INCIDENTS.

Although Moreton and Mildmay had frequently met at Beechland, and on the highway, they really were but little acquainted with each other. Mr. Moreton was ceremonious when out of his own house, and Mildmay had found constant occupation on his plantation; and, with Annie's society, had no particular inducement to go abroad,—so, although Mr. Moreton and Mildmay sat down together with the mutual idea of being pleased with each other's society, yet it was nevertheless true, that the emotions of sympathy were yet to be called forth by the interchange of harmonious thoughts.

A few moments' conversation only had taken place before Mr. Moreton and Mildmay, to their own astonishment, found that they differed on every interchange of sentiment; and as Mr. Moreton, living as he did in a somewhat solitary place, had, by long association with his negroes, become, insensibly to himself, restive under contradiction, although respectfully offered, and from one he acknowledged an equal; still his abruptness of manner at

first caused Mildmay to yield in silence, and then to differ from Mr. Moreton even beyond the natural bent of his true feelings.

"I think that this custom that prevails with some Southern people of sending their children to the North to be educated is decidedly wrong, and very ridiculous," said Mr. Moreton, with great emphasis of manner.

"I must beg to differ with you again," said Mildmay, quietly, "for I have found not only the Northern colleges excellent as literary institutions, but useful, in giving the collateral advantage of acquaintance with the social and commercial character of our brethren of the whole Union."

"I don't see the advantage you speak of," returned Moreton, energetically; "we send our young men on to the North, and they come back with their heads crammed full of literary trash, and Southern institutions are made distasteful to them: I think it ruins them altogether."

"I haven't found such to be my experience," said Mildmay, for the instant annoyed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Moreton, slightly coloring; "but the fact is, I forgot, in my knowledge of your Southern birth and interests, that *you* had ever seen the North; so you must excuse me, for I don't in my own mind identify you with the Yankees."

"But I have shown great willingness myself to be identified with them," said Mildmay, laughing; "for," he continued, "the best half of me is the very pith of the Mayflower stock."

"True, true," said Mr. Moreton, his natural gallantry getting the better of his prejudices; "and I wish such rare

infusions were more frequent: but you will admit, my dear Mildmay," continued he, after a pause, "that the tendency of Northern colleges are anti-Southern in their influence."

"Not necessarily so," said Mildmay, with decision "for," he continued, "out of three hundred students I was associated with at Malden, most of whom were Yankees, and to the manner born, there were but two avowed abolitionists; and what is most remarkable, one of those insanities is now an editor of a secession paper in South Carolina, and the other a school teacher in Georgia, publishing addresses cautioning the planters of the South against using New England primers, lest they get unconsciously infected with abolition sentiments in spelling English words."

"Well, there," said Moreton, whirling around upon his chair and snapping his fingers in triumph, "don't you see, Mr. Mildmay, by your own showing, something contemptible in the ——," and Moreton stopped.

"You were going to say, 'New England character,'" suggested Mildmay, smiling; "but, I see nothing of the kind in my illustration, and these two young men that I speak of, are mere time-servers. They thought that anti-slavery sentiments would help their personal interests in Connecticut, and so they adopted them. Finishing their education, they went South, and, always consistent, they flatter the pro-slavery feeling among us, and are as heartless and unprincipled and dangerous in their new vocation, as they were in their old; and," continued Mildmay, his eyes flashing fire, "I loathe and despise such cowardly

creatures; they are a disgrace when compared with the lowest standards of man."

"I never had any other feeling for them," said Mr. Moreton, with complacency.

"You will pardon me, sir," said Mildmay, "if I say, that this truckling to interest, this sacrifice of conscience and truth, is not peculiar to New England, or New England men. I think I meet parallel examples sometimes in my visits to Beechland. I see hypocrites at our doors, for I mistrust the sincerity of all men, who, owning no negroes themselves, are violent in defence of our peculiar institutions."

"I never took that view of it," said Moreton, rising, and walking rapidly up and down the gallery; "perhaps you are right."

"I know that I am right," said Mildmay; "look," he continued, "at the burnings and lynchings of negroes, which have disgraced the fair fame of the South, and it will be found that the planters, the men of wealth and education, have rarely been participators—the deeds were done by irresponsible men, who owned no negroes themselves, but who thus gratified their unholy passions, through the corrupt idea, that their excessive zeal gave evidence of devotion to Southern interests."

"Mildmay, I believe that what you say is true," said Moreton, stopping in his walk, and falling into a brown study, and then thrown off his guard by Mildmay's impressiveness——"Now, I remember, in the Murrell excitement, we tried an incendiary at Beechland, and Judge Lynch sentenced him to be hung. But when the poor fellow was on the gallows, no one would act as Jack Ketch, and the

poor devil would have got off, had not a stranger in the place, and himself suspected of abolition sentiments, adjusted the rope, and launched the victim into eternity."

"And, by this murder, the suspected individual appeased the public sentiment against himself," said Mildmay, with emotion.

"Oh yes," said Mr. Moreton, as if relieved from an oppressive feeling,—"oh yes, and the man has lived in Beechland ever since."

"And would hang *us* to-morrow," said Mildmay, with disgust, "if the insurrection were against us. Upon such wretched social materials, upon such a moral volcano, do we slaveholders exist."

As Mildmay concluded, Mr. Moreton absolutely fell into his chair. Strange ideas had been awakened in his mind,—thoughts that had slumbered for years, aroused. A sort of desolate feeling came over him, the future looked gloomy and uncertain, and for a moment he mentally groped in darkness,—and then, brushing his hand across his brow, he said:

"Mildmay, if we would happily live in the South, we must not look so deeply and darkly upon the things around us;" and with this remark, Mr. Moreton's thoughts launched again into the current of life, allowing the present only to occupy his mind; the future he carefully excluded.

Fortunately, to relieve both gentlemen of their embarrassment, Col. Lee, the only person invited to dine with the Moretons, on Mildmay's visit, was seen riding toward the house; and by this exclusive invitation Mr. Moreton intended to show Mildmay the high esteem he placed

upon his visit, for Col. Lee was presumed only to honor with his company people of admitted pretensions, for he claimed for himself, to be one of the "first families of Virginia," and consequently was aristocratic to the last degree.

The moment that Moreton caught sight of the Colonel, he walked out upon the lawn and met that gentleman half way, and accompanied him into the house. The Colonel had evidently determined to make an impression. He saluted Mildmay with a courteous dignity, such as Washington may have been presumed to use on great state occasions, and before he had well seated himself, a servant was already by his side, with a salver containing *liqueurs*, and a pitcher of cool water.

Col. Lee helped himself to a glass of wine, and turning to Moreton and Mildmay, he expressed his pleasure at seeing them both looking so well, trusted that the ladies were in good health, and that Mrs. Mildmay found the climate of Louisiana to agree with her constitution; and, tossing off his wine, he remarked complacently,

"Moreton, you have the most excellent water on your place. I know of none so good in the neighborhood. It is a great blessing to have good water," and thereupon the Colonel begged to be excused, as he was quite thirsty from riding in the dust, and he helped himself again to the sherry, and then seated himself in an elegant attitude, and seemed to be prepared to receive admiration of his personal appearance, and to listen patiently to hear any remarks that might be made in conversation.

The moment that Col. Lee took his seat, Mr. Moreton brightened up, and a lively conversation ensued, in which

Mildmay became interested, from the novelty of the ideas constantly presented, although they were not always in accordance with his manner of thinking.

As Mr. Moreton had a large family, the subject of education was a source of constant reflection; and as the exchange of ideas progressed, Mr. Moreton, unintentionally to himself, made some of his favorite remarks against Northern institutions of learning, when Colonel Lee, perceiving that Mildmay had differed with Moreton on their merits, broke out into a eulogistic defence of Southern Colleges, and wound up by a graphic description of the "Virginia University," an institution, he said, that was the fountain of chivalry, of profound scholarship, and statesmanship; and gradually progressing, he gave many anecdotes of the amusements of the students, and described with inimitable humor, a cock-fight, that took place one evening in "the chapel," in which one of the professors lost to him nearly a half gallon of brandy, besides a box of the best Spanish cigars.

Mrs. Moreton had scarcely gone through the pantomime of showing Annie, rather than telling her, how very distracting Toots' noise was to her head, when a negro presented herself at Mrs. Moreton's door, and, making a low courtesy, said:

"Mistress, Aunt Dinah's done got worse."

"One of your servants sick?" said Annie.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Moreton, putting on a light shawl, "one of our most valuable women has had 'the fever,' and it seems impossible to break it," and as Mrs. Moreton said this she opened an armoire door, and after fumbling among

various vials and papers, she took something in her hand, and excusing herself to Annie, was about to leave the room, when she turned and said: "Mrs. Mildmay, perhaps you would like to walk down to the quarters with me."

Annie at the instant hearing the voice of her husband and Mr. Moreton on the front gallery, as if engaged in an interesting conversation, at once assented, and at Mrs. Moreton's suggestion, put on a large sun-bonnet that was lying near by in a chair. Thus equipped, she and Mrs. Moreton proceeded down stairs and passed into the yard back of the house, a number of little negroes instantly presenting themselves, who ran ahead and opened the garden gates.

The buildings occupied by Mr. Moreton's negroes, were quite a feature of his plantation. When he first moved upon it, he found nothing but a few 'log pens.' One of them he fitted up for himself and wife, for he had no children at that time; and as soon as he got somewhat settled his first improvements consisted in the erection of sixteen commodious cabins, that were in equal numbers arranged in two parallel lines, making what appeared to be the beginning of a handsome street. At the head was built a large double cabin, with a spacious verandah, as the house of the overseer. These buildings finished, Mr. Moreton continued for a long time to reside in his now, by contrast, still more humble hut, and he became for a while quite famous for furnishing his negroes better houses than he himself occupied.

"Have you had much sickness on your place?" inquired Mrs. Moreton, as she walked along.

"Some," said Annie, hesitatingly, "but I have never seen any myself."

"Is it possible?" returned Mrs. Moreton; "how have you been so fortunate?" she asked, with a face expressive of surprise.

"Why, I have never been told by Mr. Mildmay that I should go to the quarters on such occasions, and I am sure I would not volunteer."

"I have been accustomed from my childhood up," half musingly said Mrs. Moreton, "to nurse with my own hands the sick.—I did it on my father's place, and have continued to do it ever since I was married to Mr. Moreton." As the lady concluded, she, with Annie, stepped into Aunt Dinah's cabin.

In a room sixteen by twenty feet in size, and destitute of furniture, save a very rude bedstead, the frame of which was nailed against the wall, lay stretched out the form of the patient—of the sick Dinah.

Annie drew back with considerable dread, when she first looked into the cabin of the slave, but seeing Mrs. Moreton enter, and with the most sympathetic manner, proceed at once to the bedside of the patient, she affected to overcome her great repugnance and followed her hostess.

"How do you feel, Dinah?" said her mistress, taking the sick woman's hand unresistingly in her own.

The negress seemed to have fallen into a doze, and when she opened her eyes, the astonishment she displayed was unbounded, as she beheld not only her mistress, but the delicate form of Annie bending over her.

"What is the matter?" inquired Mrs. Moreton, with a soothing voice.

"I done got berry sick," said Dinah, still in wonder.

"Let me look at your tongue," said Mrs. Moreton.

The negress did as she was desired, and Mrs. Moreton, after a moment's speculation, said:

"Dinah, you have been eating something to make you sick; I see it by your high fever, and believe it, because little Ann gives me to understand you have been complaining again of pain."

"I ain't done eat nothin'," said the woman stolidly, and giving a sigh, at the same time groaning and turning her face to the wall.

Mrs. Moreton was not to be deceived. To Annie's surprise she cross-questioned the woman, and again looked at her tongue, and finally pressed her delicate fingers upon the negress' chest.

"I see how it is," said Mrs. Moreton finally, a shade of regret passing over her face, "you have been to the water-melon patch, and have likely killed yourself."

"Aint done eat nothin,'" repeated Dinah.

Hasn't Dinah been eating water-melon?" said Mrs. Moreton to little Ann, who just at that moment came into the cabin.

"Only one, missis," said the child.

Mrs. Moreton sat down at the foot of the dirty bed, as if perfectly disheartened, and with a face full of feeling she said to Annie:

"Mrs. Mildmay, I sat up nearly all last night with that negress, and got her through a critical sickness, and now you

see, by her own imprudence, my labor is lost, and perhaps her life endangered," and then turning to little Ann, she said: "go over to the house, and tell your Mistress Margaret, to send me the bottle of medicine I was using yesterday."

"Yes 'em," said little Ann, running out to perform the errand.

"How came you to disobey me?" said Mrs. Moreton, turning to the invalid.

"'Cause I had nothin' to eat," gruffly replied the patient.

"Did you not," said Mrs. Moreton, "get some soup today that I made for you myself?"

"Never got nothin'," said the negress, growing still more sullen.

"Ah me!" said Mrs. Moreton much annoyed, and turning to Annie, she said:

"You will find, Mrs. Mildmay, after you have had my experience, that a planter's wife is the greatest slave that exists. If I don't see to every thing, all goes wrong. The soup, that I prepared to-day with so much care for this very negress, I have no doubt was eaten up by little Ann."

By this time, little Ann had returned, bringing Mrs. Moreton's parasol.

"I did not send you for this," said Mrs. Moreton, in great vexation. "What did you tell Mistress Margaret I wanted?"

"Something you done had yesterday, missis," said

little Ann, perfectly unconscious that she had made any mistake.

"I see how it is," remarked Mrs. Moreton, taking up the parasol, "I shall have to go back to my room, and either return myself or send down Aunt Margaret, or I shall never be certain that what I desire is done aright," and wrapping her shawl around her, the two ladies walked slowly home.

"I am sure," said Annie, after they left the hearing of the patient, "that I never can be so good a nurse as you. Why, Mrs. Moreton," she continued, "I cannot overcome my repugnance to the blacks enough, to bear with comfort the necessary presence of my servants, and I fear that I could never be of use, by the side of those that are sick."

"I never had such feelings," said Mrs. Moreton, without expressing the least emotion of curiosity or surprise.

The moment that the mistress and guest were gone, Violet, who watched them from the chamber window, went back into the room where she first met Annie, and taking up that lady's bonnet she placed it upon her head, and drawing the ears close down to her face, she surveyed the effect with evident admiration. She next put on the riding habit and throwing a shawl over her left arm, she gracefully lifted the long skirt from about her feet, and commenced a pantomime, in which was displayed with artistic perfection, not only Annie's manner, but also Mrs. Moreton's, and the nice distinction which Violet made in the characters, as she carried on an imaginary conversation, could not be excelled.

The "favorite servant" then leaned affectedly upon a

high-backed arm-chair, and eyeing the red velvet of the upright cushion with the most languishing expression, she said: "Why, Mr. Mildmay, I am so fatigued, I'm mighty glad we got to Mr. Moreton's, it's so very warm to-day;" then throwing the shawl around her shoulders, she wrapped it close to her person, and completely changing her voice, she continued: "Really, I am so perfectly distracted with the noise of the children, and the care of them miserable idle servants, Mr. Moreton, that I shall certainly go crazy." Next falling into the chair and assuming a benign smile, she turned towards the door and went on: "There, sister, is that dear smart child again. Come here, Toots, don't you see your mother is annoyed; come, go down with Aunt Margaret and leave these unkind people," and then jumping up, in the imaginary person of Annie Mildmay, she courteseyed around the room; until, perceiving her mistress just at the entrance of the house, she hastily threw aside her borrowed plumage, and met that lady in the great hall, with a meekness and innocence of face, that was, perhaps, the best piece of acting she performed throughout the day.

In the front door of the house stood Aunty, with the baby. Aunty was a tall, ungainly-looking woman, but possessed a fine expression of countenance, and had a voice that sounded unusually cultivated for a negro.

As Annie attempted to pass on she was naturally attracted to the infant, whose little dimpled hands and arms, and innocent unformed face, formed a strong contrast with its hard-visaged, sable nurse. Annie stopped short, and raising both hands in admiration, exclaimed:

"The dear, dear, sweet little cherub."

Aunty smiled at this involuntary compliment to her charge, as much as if it had been intended for herself, and raised "the cherub" to give Annie a better view.

The baby's head rolled from side to side, on its little shoulders, while its eyes stared out on vacancy, showing that the mind had not yet lit up the clear pupil of black and blue.

"The dear sweet cherub!" again exclaimed Annie, as she buried the child in her flaxen curls.

"She's moughty sweet indeed!" finally ejaculated Aunty, "dat child, young mistress, knows too much for her age."

"Knows too much?" said Annie, laughing outright at the very idea of such a thing.

"Why, sartain," returned Aunty; "for dat are child will set and study, and think all day; she's too smart entirely, and," concluded the faithful nurse, in a commiserating voice, "if she don't stop a-doing it, she'll never make old bones, sure and sartain."

Again Annie gave the prematurely-wise infant another kiss, and heartily amused at the enthusiasm of the old negress, followed Mrs. Moreton to her room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOSPITABLE BOARD.

Throughout the day, a great bustle had prevailed in Mrs. Moreton's kitchen. Viney, the cook, was by due notice informed of the expected visit of Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay, and had been told to get as excellent a dinner as possible, in honor of the occasion. Viney had great pride in her department, and was determined to do something that would do honor to the family. The consequence was, that she had managed to get some half-a-dozen negroes added to the already over-abundant supply natural to Mr. Moreton's house; and the kitchen was not only crowded with every variety of dish, for the garnishment of the table, but it was also crowded with negroes, who, on the pretence of helping the bustling and important Viney, were really helping themselves.

The rustling of ladies' dresses in the hall, finally announced, indirectly, to the gentlemen, that dinner was on the table; and by the time they reached the parlor, the folding-doors were thrown open, and the ladies were discovered, already seated at the hospitable board.

Col. Lee was all compliments, and before taking his seat, he congratulated Mrs. Moreton on her fine appearance, expressed the most profound pleasure at meeting with Mrs. Mildmay, "of whose beauty he had heard so much," and then seated himself beside Aunt Margaret, whom he called "a lady of the Old Dominion."

Mildmay was more ceremonious, and after expressing his pleasure at seeing Mrs. Moreton, and Mrs. Marbury (Aunt Margaret), he gave a look of pleasurable intelligence to Annie, and seated himself by her side. This being done, Mr. Moreton took his place at the head of the table, and looking over the viands and his guests, with intense satisfaction, he ordered the soup to be handed round, and fell himself to carving the magnificent—and on a Southern table, never to be dispensed with—ham, that until then, untouched by knife, was resting before him.

On the first sound of the spoons upon the dishes, there came a noise in the hall, as of heavy drops of rain beating upon a roof; then could be heard children's voices, and in another instant, a dozen or more of boys and girls, of all sizes and ages, came rushing into the dining-room, clamoring for something to eat, and evidently urged on by a score of little negroes, that, in the rear, ably supported these impetuous applicants.

"These children must all be carried off," said Mr. Moreton, holding up his carving-knife and fork, and looking around as if he expected every moment that he himself would be devoured.

"Toots ain't doin 'way!" said that little romp, tumbling from some place plump into the middle of the room,

"me doin to eat dinner, and sassenger, and cake, and pie, and—and—and chickenses," and when she got thus far, Mrs. Moreton put her hands to her ears, and begged Aunt Margaret "to take *that* child, and *all* the children, away, until dinner was over."

"Take Toots up!" said Aunt Margaret to a matronly-looking negro woman, the seamstress, who had volunteered to wait on the table; "take Toots up!" continued Aunt Margaret, "and amuse her as you best can."

"I won't go to Phyllis!" said Toots, jumping up and down the room, and falling heels over head against Annie's feet.

"Come, little missis!" said Phyllis, catching hold of Toots, "come, and I'll tell you that pretty story." Toots yielded in an instant, and fairly springing into her nurse's arms, she could be heard rattling away, until her voice was lost in the distance, telling Phyllis how much "she liked to hear that pretty 'tory of the horses, and cagiges, and womens, and dogs."

Meanwhile the mass of the children, including George, Augustus, Minty, Clotilde, Charley, and "little Moreton," made a compromise with their father, that they were to have a table set in an adjoining room (this was a favorite plan of the servants); in the meanwhile, they were to go out in the yard and play.

Phyllis carried Toots into the main road, and sitting down under the shade of a magnificent live-oak, she spread a shawl on the ground, on which she put her little mistress, and told Toots for the fortieth time the following story; it being remarkable, that at each relation, Toots made the

same comments, asked the same questions, and appeared more than at any previous time, breathless with excited interest.

"Dar was once, young missis," began Phyllis, "a white gentleman, as married another wife, and she was the stuck-upest woman that never was."

"What did she do?" asked Toots, out of breath with expectation.

"Why, whipped all her black people, just for nothin' at all," continued Phyllis.

"She wouldn't whip you, would she?" said Toots, throwing her arms round Phyllis's neck.

"Wal, I 'spect not," said the girl, caressing the child, "but now listen,—you see dis stuck up white lady had three daughters, the biggest ones she made set in the parlor, under 'skeeter bars, all day, and do nothin' but have the black people wait on 'em, all the time; and de other daughter, who was mighty handsome, was kept up stairs, and wouldn't done let her go riding horseback, nor to New Orleans, nor nowhar.

"Now, you see," continued Phyllis, "somebody on de 'jining plantation gave a big ball, and 'vited all de great people, but didn't 'vite little Cind'rella; her stuck-up mother wouldn't let her go along with her bad sisters."

"I'd a kicked and hollered, and told father, if they didn't let me go to ball, and have cake, and candies, and ochancies, and apples."

"I know you would," said Phyllis, looking admiringly at Toots, "but, you see that this little Cind'rella didn't do it, but just staid at home and cried; when dar was an

old woman with a cap on, and a long nose, and a broom-stick cum'd into the room, and asked Cind'rella if she wanted to go to the ball, 'cause her sisters had done gone already. Now Cind'rella she couldn't go in course, for you see she had no handsome dress with yaller ribbons, and blue trimmings, and big breastpin, no carrige to ride, nor any black people to drive to the ball; now this old woman was a fairy."

"What's a fairy?" said Toots, wonderingly.

"A fairy," said Phyllis, looking rather foolish, "is somebody that nobody owns, dat just goes about doin' nothin', and having every thing they wants, dat's a fairy, Miss Toots. And now," she continued, "listen what de fairy done did for Cind'rella; she tuck a punkin, and made a carrige, and six mouses for horses, and a big rat for a coach-driver, and put a new dress on, and new shoes on Cind'rella, and a charm to make her look handsomer than ever, and sent her off to the big ball.

"You see," continued Phyllis, "dat de old fairy told Cind'rella dat she must cum home afore daybreak, her pass was up you see by dat time, and if she stopped, de patrolers would cotch her. Now Cind'rella was a dancin' a 'giny reel, with the young master, who owned two hundred black people, and dey had plenty music, six banjos, and three fiddles, but den daybreak cum all ov a sudden, and Cind'rella, 'spectin' her pass wouldn't do no longer, tuck to her heels, and left her shoe in de middle of de floor.

"Now de rich young man, dat owned two hundred black people, was in lub wid Cind'rella, and as he couldn't find her plantation; he sent all his black people out to find

the young missis that lost her shoe at de time de dancing was gwine on; at last dey found her up in de arbor sound asleep, wid one shoe, and dey know'd it was her, and dey had a big weddin', and every body cum—Mr. Mildmay, and Col. Lee, and—"

"Cousin Annie," suggested Toots.

"Yes," said Phyllis, "Mistress Annie—and all de black people was dressed up, a waitin' on de tables, and such a time was never know'd afore."

"Oh, how I would like to have been there!" said Toots, clapping her little hands, "wouldn't I had fun, and thrown turkey bones across the table, and made mother take me in her lap, and sing me to sleep when—" and Toots rose from her reclining position, and attempting to spin round, to show Phyllis how she would go to sleep, she twisted the shawl about her feet, and as usual, rolled heels over head, but instantly releasing herself, she went whooping off down the road, in pursuit of a gaudy butterfly, that was fluttering along, seemingly on purpose to entice the little fairy away from home.

Mr. Moreton's children assembled in the lawn, accompanied by all the little negroes that could be gathered up on the plantation; and it was enthusiastically agreed to play "Runaway." George, a boy about ten years of age, was captain; and in his imperative manner, and restiveness under restraint, displayed toward his little dependents, was a perfect representation of his father. He organized the play that gave them all so much pleasure.

A little negro, some eight years old, named Puggy Bill, selected because he was a favorite with "young

master," personated the "runaway;" and according to direction, he tracked over the lawn, running around the trees, and behind the out-buildings,—turning and twisting in every possible direction, so as not to cross his own footsteps. The children, white and black, watching the course of this little "star in the comedy," and occasionally shouting out their pleasure, whenever Puggy Bill showed any unusual degree of shrewdness in tracking his devious way.

At the feet of George was held, by several officious little negro boys—a young, and scarcely weaned, deer-hound. The animal—pup though it was, showed by its heavy limbs, long silken ears, and bright eyes, that it was of game blood. It seemed to understand that it occupied a prominent place in the amusements of the hour, and rested patiently until it was time for action.

At length Puggy Bill completed his circuit, and came up, quite out of breath, to the group he some fifteen minutes before had left; when, at a given signal, "Clamper," the puppy, was put on "the trail;" and as he set off, childish shouts encouraged him on his way. The dog, with his nose close to the ground, followed Puggy Bill's tracks with a precision that gave the children the greatest delight; and as he wound around and followed, to admiring eyes, the unseen course, he was continually cheered. Excited himself, at last, as he was nearing the end of the chase, the puppy began to give forth cries of excitement, and opened its unformed throat, and yelped with puppy joy.

Presently he threaded the group of children, and leaped rapturously on Puggy Bill, who received the favorite with open arms, covering him with caresses; "young

master" George, meanwhile, going on with various explicatives, as if the runaway, although caught, had made resistance, and consequently had to be beaten, or shot down.

The sumptuous dinner was brought to a close,—Annie stood under the gallery, equipped in her riding-dress,—Col. Lee had insisted that her palfrey should be brought close up to the door. Mr. Moreton and Aunt Margaret shook Annie cordially by the hand, and repeated over and over again the pleasure they had experienced in her society. Mr. Moreton and Col. Lee courteously contended who should assist Annie on her horse, who, fairly mounted, waved her adieus; and Mildmay, springing in the saddle, lifted his hat, and in a moment more he and his young wife were cantering down the road,—the declining sun cautioning them that they must be quick-footed, if they would not be surrounded while in the forest by the solitude of night.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TITLE DEED.

Squire Andrew Hobby was professedly a justice of the peace; his chief business, however, was writing out bills for the sale of negroes. He was naturally a pompous man, but generally concealed this peculiarity, as he was dependent upon the good will of the populace for his official dignity. Hobby had a high regard for Mildmay, simply because that gentleman had never treated him with the least passing notice; and he was accordingly quite flattered, when Mildmay checked his horse in front of his little office one morning, and stated that he desired at a particularly named time his official services at the "Heri tage Place."

"And what is it you desire of me?" inquired Hobby before Mildmay had time to finish his commission.

"Simply," returned Graham, "to execute the papers for the sale of a negro; and my reason for troubling you to come out to my house is, that it may possibly be inconvenient for Mrs. Mildmay to visit Beechland, to sign the title deed."

"I'll come out with pleasure," said Hobby, rubbing his hands with excitement; "this office of mine is not much of a place to invite ladies in."

"The office is well enough," said Mildmay; "but ladies, you are aware, find it difficult to leave home."

"They do," returned Hobby, with emphasis; and suddenly assuming his natural manner, he continued, "Ladies thrive best in the domestic circle, surrounded by the endearments of home; and, as the editor of the Southern War Trumpet observes, depending for support upon the sterner sex, as the vine upon the lordly oak."

"You are quite an enthusiast, Mr. Hobby, when alluding to the sex," returned Mildmay, gathering up the loose bridle-reins, and preparing to leave.

"Quite," said Hobby, trying to look impressive; "quite, Mr. Mildmay, for we can never return the debt of gratitude we owe to woman."

Graham struck his spur gently into his horse's flanks, and as the generous animal started off, he muttered to himself, "Confound that fellow's stereotyped compliments; why don't he practise some of his professions, by taking the most ordinary care of his notoriously neglected wife."

When Mildmay reached home, Mr. Speers was waiting for him upon the gallery of the house. Mildmay saluted the gentleman, and after a few moments' conversation with Annie, returned to his guest.

"I saw Squire Hobby," said he, drawing up a chair, and ordering Governor to bring some refreshments; "and

I presume he will soon be here, as I saw his horse saddled before I left town."

"I'm not specially engaged at this time," returned Speers, in a drawling voice, filling his tumbler half full of brandy, and declining any water. "I've been over the crap this morning,' he continued, "and though smartly in the grass, I reckon the niggers can get along without being touched up, till night, if they must."

"I am very sorry," said Mildmay, going to his desk, and getting out some papers, "that Mr. Murritt, when he sold me the girl Mary, did not say you owned her husband."

"He wouldn't a' told you that, and been sharp at a trade," said Speers, his eyes twinkling at the preposterous idea of a trader's saying any thing to interfere with a bargain; "for," he suggested, "maybee, you wouldn't have bought the girl, if you know'd she had been separated from her husband."

"I certainly would not," said Mildmay, his face flushing with excitement.

"And do you 'spose," said Speers, with a kind of triumph unconsciously displayed in his voice, "that Murritt could make a living if he consulted his niggers as to how he should sell 'em?"

Mildmay bit his lip, and internally acknowledging, in spite of himself, that his long residence in the North had unprepared him somewhat for the associations around him; and, at the moment, perceiving the busy Mr. Hobby approaching, he walked toward the gate to meet him, and lead the way to the house.

Again the ceremony of drinking was gone through with, much to the gratification of Speers and Hobby,—the latter gentleman observing, much to the admiration of Speers,

"That if he ever did own a big plantation, he rather thought if he hadn't any thing else good, he would have 'No. 1,' sperits;" when, suddenly recollecting that Speers owned only a small plantation, he continued, smiling toward that gentleman, "in the mean time, I'd have plenty of plain whiskey."

"This Mildmay is rather a stiff man," said Speers, looking nervously about, Graham having for the moment left his guests.

"He is," almost whispered Hobby; "but you see," he went on, "it's the way with the rich,—they can afford to put on airs."

"But," continued Speers, with a sort of injured expression, "Mildmay won't drink,—won't frolic,—won't card,—won't chaw,—and smokes a cigar as if he did'nt love it; what kind of a man is that?" and Speers looked at Hobby as if he had given a question too difficult for human solution.

"Why, you see, the fact is," said Hobby, puckering up his mouth with the expression that he assumed when on "the bench," "you see Mr. Mildmay, though born in old Carolina, was raised among the Yankees, and his edication has been neglected; I haven't lived, Mr. Speers, in Beechland nigh on to fifteen years for nothing:" and Hobby looked more profound than ever, and touching Speers upon the breast, he continued:

"We have had a good many cases here like Mildmay, that didn't cut up such shindys more than a year or two, and then begun and went it strong to make up. Why Jim Ruggles, as keeps the race-track, and was tried last court for stocking cards, commenced here nine years ago worse than Mildmay."

"That Jim Ruggles is a good fellow," said Speers, with great sympathy, and not exactly comprehending Esq. Hobby's meaning; and he continued, with some animation, "that 'ere 'ditement 'bout the cards was done, just 'cause Ruggles is so poor that he can't pertect himself from abuse."

"That's true,—that's true," said the politic Hobby; "for you see," added he, "Major Lively said to the court, 'that if wringing in an ace or two at the last game was to be made a fine of, why he could present the hull bar to the grand jury;' and so the matter dropped."

When Mildmay returned to the gallery, he was accompanied by a negro girl about twenty years of age, whose drabbled homespun garments betrayed that she had but just left the wet grass of the cotton field.

"Here's Mary," said he, to Mr. Speers; "you have seen her, and are willing to purchase her at the stipulated price of six hundred dollars?"

Speers rolled his eyes over towards the girl, and examined her from head to foot; then getting up, and whirling her round by a rough jerk of her shoulder, and stooping down and rubbing with his finger a perceptible scar on the calf of the girl's leg, he again seemed desirous to take a good look, and stood off, and put himself in an attitude

assumed by connoisseurs when viewing at a rare picture. He then turned to her, and abruptly said,

"How come that scar on your leg?"

"It's whar a dog bit me," said the girl, with perfect indifference. "Squire Hobby," said Speers, "look at that scratch there, and tell me if you believe that girl's lying."

Hobby at once assumed his official face, and, stooping down, appeared to make a most critical inspection.

"What do you think of it?" said Speers, finally growing impatient.

"Why," said the learned justice, "it mout have been made by a lash, and it mout have been made by a dog's bite, or a brier; I suspect it was the effect of accident, as the girl says."

"That's enough," said Speers, seeming to be relieved; "for you see," he continued, 'I don't buy no scarred niggers; if I want any sich marks on my property, I'll make 'em myself."

"You have decided positively not to sell this girl's husband to me?" said Graham.

"Yes," said Speers, gruffly; "for you see, Mr. Mildmay, I don't know why I shouldn't own a good nigger as well as any body else."

"Nor do I," said Mildmay, thoroughly annoyed; "I wish Mr. Speers you owned a hundred, if you desire to,—only I regret that I should have been the instrument of separating the wife from a negro, to whom you seem so much attached."

Speers evidently felt mortified that he had spoken as he did, and in a milder voice he said,

"What's the use of troubling ourselves whether this gal lives with Cooney or not; she can find husbands enough on Heritage Place."

"Mary," said Mildmay, turning to the negro, "when I proposed to buy you, you said that you were not married?"

"So I did, master," said the girl, moodily, "but if I hadn't told you so, Mr. Murritt would a' killed me after you went away."

"Mr. Mildmay," said Speers, perfectly unconscious of the feelings agitating Graham's breast, "if you'd like to keep that gal, you needn't be afeard that Cooney will come on your premises after I tell him to keep away; I would like to own a nigger that would go whar I told him not to."

"It is not best to tempt him so strongly to disobey you," said Mildmay.

"Well, if Cooney disobeys me, it shan't be any trouble to *you*," said Speers, trying to be agreeable.

"You see Mary," said Mildmay, turning to the girl, "that by being controlled, you deceived me; now you are at liberty to speak the truth: do you prefer to go with Mr. Speers, or stay with me?"

"I want to be with Cooney," was the terse answer.

"Very well," said Mildmay; "now go to the quarters, gather up your clothes and bedding, and come to the shed of the blacksmith's shop in the front road."

The girl replied, "Yes, sir," and walked away.

Mildmay at once produced pen, ink, and paper, and with the assistance of Governor, they were with a table placed on the gallery; and Squire Hobby proceeded to his business of amanuensis.

After examining the pen in every possible light, sticking the nib between his lips, turning round the paper, and, in fact, going through much seemingly useless pantomime, he assumed a very grave face; and, turning to Mildmay, said:

"What's the girl's name?"

"Mary."

"Her age?"

"About twenty."

"Consideration?"

"Six hundred dollars," said Speers.

"Cash?" said the squire, scratching his nose with the feather end of the pen.

"Cash," said Speers, pulling out a roll of bills and gold half eagles, and laying them down on the table.

These questions and answers having been obtained, the squire set himself to work. Graham meanwhile went up into Annie's room, and informed her that her presence was necessary one moment to sign the bill of sale.

The little wife was trembling and nervous, and it instantly attracted Mildmay's attention. "What can the matter be, Annie?" said he, tenderly putting his arm round her waist.

"Nothing," said she, trying to look unconcerned; "but you know that I am not accustomed to the forms of

business, and I feel an unusual amount of trepidation: perhaps I am not as well as I might be."

"I fear so," said Graham, looking affectionately down into her face; "you confine yourself too much; let us get clear of this loquacious squire, and our plain, but I have no doubt worthy neighbor, Mr. Speers, and then for a ride down the road. 'Sunnyside' is getting as fat as a Christmas goose just for want of exercise."

"A ride let it be," said Annie, with animation; and arm-and-arm they proceeded to the gallery.

Meanwhile, Squire Hobby was intently busy on the longest word in the matter before him; and as he never could master that particular word without much trouble, he was working it out, by pronouncing aloud each letter as he went along; while Speers was intently watching progress,—he having great interest that every thing should be done right.

"There's 'redhibitory' written out in full," said the squire, breathing freely, as if he had accomplished a gigantic task.

"What does it mean?" asked Speers, gathering up all his money in his hand.

"Why it means just this," said the squire, waving his pen around in a sort of flourish; "it means this: 'Redhibition, 'cording to the Code (art. 2497), means the avoidance of sale on account of some vice or defect of the thing sold, which renders its use either absolutely useless, or its use so inconvenient and imperfect, that it must be supposed that the buyer would not have purchased it, had he known of the vice.'"

"Does it mean all that 'ere?" said Speers, looking with a sort of awe upon Hobby.

"It don't do any thing else," said the squire, really excited; "and there's many a lawyer as would charge you a double 'V' for not half that information."

"Has Mary got any thing of the kind you have just been reading about?" continued Speers, putting back his money into his pocket.

"Not as I knows on," said the squire, enjoying the triumph achieved by his legal knowledge; "for you see, Mr. Speers, the Code says:

"'Nor can the buyer (art. 2498) institute the redhibitory action, on account of the *latent defects*, which the seller has declared to him before or at the time of the sale.'"

"What does that mean?" said Speers, his ideas now nearly all aground.

"Why," continued the squire, "the 'latent defects' of niggers and animals, 'cording to the Code (art. 2500), is divided into two classes; vices of body,—vices of character. The absolute vices of horses and mules is short wind and glanders; the absolute vices of niggers is leprosy, madness, and epilepsy. The vices of character which give rise to the redhibition of slaves is, that the slave has committed a capital crime, or is addicted to theft, or running away; and they ain't no vices of character for horses set down in the Code (art. 2505), though I think stumbling, colic, and founder, is in horses redhibitory defects."

"But you don't mean to say," said Speers, now per-

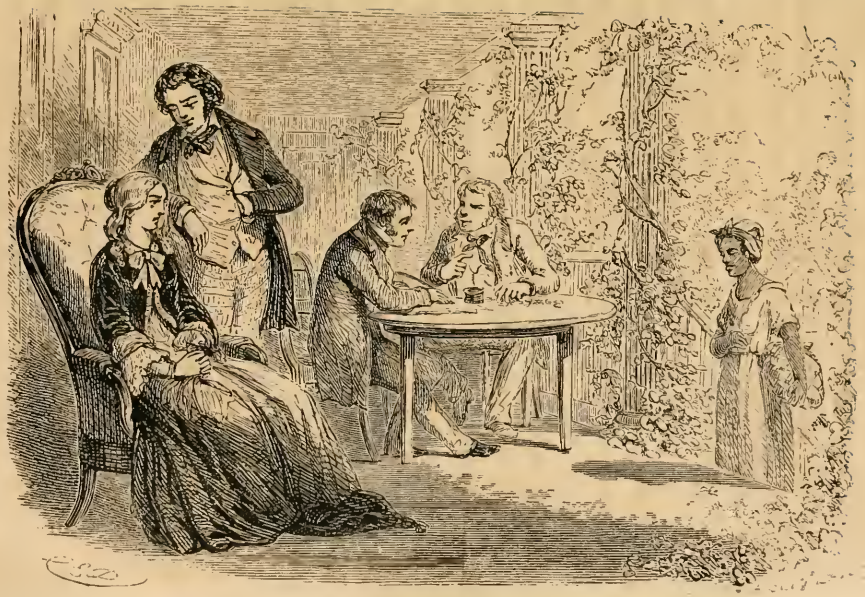
fectly confounded, "that that 'ere nigger I'm going to buy of Mr. Mildmay has got the leprosy, founders, glanders, theft, and all that sort of thing, do you?"

"I mean," said Squire Hobby, endeavoring to imitate his ideal standard of judicial dignity, "that if this nigger Mary has any of them 'ere things, and you find it out afore it is too late, just because I tuck that 'ere word redhibitory down where it is, it gives you your money back,—and that's what I mean;" and the squire intended to have laid back in his chair, as if deeply fatigued under his official importance, when his eye caught sight of Mildmay and Annie coming toward them.

The delicate sylph-like beauty of Annie attracted both these individuals; and their admiration, involuntarily expressed, could not be felt less than complimentary—it was so sincere. Annie took her seat near the table, and after a few moments' pause, Squire Hobby went on, and completed his labor.

The moment that Mildmay saw the paper was drawn up, he proposed at once to close the transaction, pleading, as a reason for his haste, pressing engagements upon his time. This would have been done, but for the squire's vanity; his quotations from the Code had thrown Speers into a profound confusion, and he stated that before the paper was signed, and the money paid, that he must go out and take another look at Mary,—which he did, and not finding visible to his eyes any thing as alarming as the law terms he had heard, he signified his willingness to go on, by again producing his gold and bills.

After considerable time, six piles of money, of one hun-



SALE OF MARY SPEERS.

dred dollars each were counted out, and shoved over towards Esq. Hobby, Mildmay remarking, "that the amount was right."

The squire inwardly congratulated himself upon the opportunity he had of displaying his varied talents before Annie, and in an unusually loud voice, even for him, began to read as follows:

"Beechland, June 15th, 18—. Know all men by these presents, that I, Graham Mildmay, of the first part, do, by these presents, grant, bargain, sell and convey to Mr. Joseph William Speers, of the second part, a certain negro girl named Mary La Tour, aged about twenty years, of a dark and nearly black color, no distinguishing marks of form, scars, or peculiarities remembered—"

"There is a dog bite on the calf of her leg," said Speers, turning perfectly red with astonishment, as he raised his eyes and saw Annie looking on with surprise, for Speers, was so intent with the purchase, that the reading of the bill for the moment banished every thing else from his mind.

"It's a mere form," said the squire, gesticulating with his hand, "mere form, Mr. Speers."

"And more verbose than positively necessary, is it not?" said Mildmay, exceedingly vexed that Annie had been compelled to be present.

"Not at all," said the squire. I copied this form from Col. Lee's document, when he sold Tom Jefferson, or Jeff as he was called, and it is admitted that Lee is the best lawyer, being from old Virginia, to make tight papers in

a transaction of this kind, that has ever been in Louisiana or Mississippi either."

"Well, go on," said Mildmay very impatiently; and as if to protect Annie from further rude remarks, he put his arm around her chair.

"Where was I?" said the squire, taking up the paper before him. "Oh—ah—I know," and he went on as follows:

"No distinguishing marks of form, scars, or particulars remembered; said girl, Mary La Tour, being sold for the sum of six hundred dollars, lawful money of the United States, cash in hand paid, and hereby acknowledged by the party of the first part, Graham Mildmay, Esq. The said girl, Mary La Tour, being fully warranted from all redhibitory defects, sound in body and mind, and the title guarantees, against all others for ever, the said Mary La Tour as a slave for life."

Annie, who had listened to all the proceedings with mechanical attention, now arose, as Graham, taking the pen in his hand, signified that the title deed was complete. He then dashed his name across the paper, placed the pen in Annie's hand, and pointed where she should place her name.

"Is this positively necessary?" said she, looking earnestly at Graham. "Most certainly," said Squire Hobby, "you see, madam, your paraphernal rights would otherwise vitiate the title."

"And break up the trade," chimed in Speers.

Annie took up the pen, and her usually delicate and

neatly written name straggled over the paper, a fearful evidence to Graham's eye of the conflict going on in Annie's mind, which he alone, of those who witnessed it, could appreciate.

The duty performed, Mildmay accompanied Annie to the entrance of the great hall where stood Clemmy; and leaving her with the faithful servant, Mildmay returned,—took up the money still lying on the table, and crushing it together in his hand, without counting it, much to the astonishment of Speers, gave it to Governor, and told him to place it in the escritoire, and get some fresh water and the decanters, as he presumed the gentlemen were thirsty.

The ceremony of drinking having been gone through with, Mildmay paid Esq. Hobby for his services, walked down to the front gate, waited until both gentlemen had mounted, and bidding them good day, returned rapidly to the house.

Speers and Hobby rode along a rod or two, when they came up to Mary, who was sitting in a listless attitude on the stump of a fallen tree, her bundle beside her.

"Here's your owner," said Hobby, thus giving the introduction, "and a good master he will be too," continued he, the politician never deserting him.

Mary looked up, and shouldering her bundle, quietly asked, "Master, which way must I go?"

"Cross the bayou beyond here, at the old ruined gin-house," said Speers, pointing down the road with his heavy whip, "go through the woods and you will see Cooney with

the other niggers at work in the field, ask him for a hoe, and stir your stumps until I come."

"Yes, master," said Mary, and then she glibly marched away, while Speers and Hobby together rode toward Beechland.

CHAPTER XVI.

DIXON'S REMORSE.

THERE was living in the vicinity of Beechland, a rich widow, known as Mrs. Hartshorn, past the prime of life, and who, being deeply absorbed in the duties of personally looking after a large estate, attracted but little attention in the vicinity. Her residence was much out of the way, and no one, except on business, or with direct intent, ever visited her.

Why she remained a widow caused the usual speculation, but it was evident that she was either disinclined to enter a second time into the bonds of matrimony, or was difficult to please, for many authentic cases were known, and freely spoken of, where she had almost rudely refused some of the presumptuous worthies in the neighborhood.

On the edge of Beechland, just at the cross roads, was an old and much decayed church. Years previous, it had been a pretty village sanctuary, and beneath its shadow reposed the remains of many of the earlier settlers of the country. But for a long time it had been neglected. The doors were battered in,—the windows broken,—the grave-

yard fence nearly destroyed,—in short it was the resting-place of domestic animals, and never of any philanthropic use, unless for the temporary shelter it afforded, as a resting-place for the night, to passing emigrants.

One afternoon, to the astonishment of the villagers, some twenty of Mrs. Hartshorn's best field hands came into town in an ox wagon, and as they proceeded along through the street, made the air vocal with their rude songs, and finally, stopping in front of the deserted church, they went to work with hoe and shovel, and in the course of a few hours produced an improvement, that was charming to behold.

The doors were partially restored to their places. The seats and floor of the interior of the building were carefully cleaned, and the labor thus bestowed, rendered the heretofore neglected building, considering the mildness of the weather, a comfortable place for the assembling together of the people:

The succeeding morning the *Southern Clarion*, the local paper of Beechland, in the most conspicuous place in its editorial columns, contained the following notice.

"We have the pleasure of announcing to our numerous readers, and all others in the vicinity of our thriving and prosperous town, that the Reverend W. Claremont Goshawk, D. D., the great orator and divine, who has so long been distinguished for his defence of Southern institutions, and his deep interest in the cause of Southern education, has consented, at the earnest request of some of our most influential citizens, to preach a series of two or more sermons. His first discourse will be on Sunday morning next,

and he will probably continue with us throughout the entire week. It is presumed that he will be greeted with an overflowing audience. We hardly think that it is necessary to remind our readers, that Mr. Goshawk, on a recent visit to the North, was attacked by many of the fanatical clergymen in that part of the country on the subject of Christian slaveholders, and that his defence of our time-honored institution, was admitted to be the finest piece of eloquence, and most stirring appeal that has appeared for years; he entirely silenced the wolves in sheep's clothing, who, under the guise of the religious cloak, are carrying torches in their hands to fire the temple of our great republic. By the kindness of one of our most beautiful and accomplished ladies in the vicinity of Beechland, who has in this case acted in a manner so characteristic of the gentler sex, our little temple of worship, so long the cherished ornament of our town, and whose spire so plainly points the way to heaven, has been thoroughly scrubbed out and renovated, and will afford comfortable seats for our entire population."

The weather was exceedingly pleasant, and there was a universal desire to hear the Rev. Mr. Goshawk. That dignitary, himself, had been for more than a day the inmate of Mrs. Hartshorn's house, for it was suddenly recalled to the mind of some of the people around the Headquarters, that early one morning, they saw a tall and good-looking gentleman, dressed in black, in the widow's carriage, which was rapidly whirling through the streets.

Perhaps Annie was more interested than any one else; accustomed to attend church every sabbath, from her youth

upward, she found this privilege most difficult to dispense with, and the moment the public notice met her eye, she consulted Graham, who gave Governor orders to have the carriage in readiness for the following Sabbath morning.

For a long time Beechland had not borne so gay an appearance, as it did in its desire to do honor to the Rev. Mr. Goshawk. Families living many miles distant, had come to "hear the discourse," and almost all of the available ground in the immediate vicinity of the church, was occupied by splendid "turn-outs,"—in fact the carriages, in number and equipments, would have done honor to some state occasion.

People who had been living in each other's neighborhood for years, now met to renew acquaintances that had grown dull for want of attrition, and a genial feeling pervaded the entire assemblage.

The very sight of the pleasing throng, the subdued, yet self-evident bustle, revived in Annie's mind, most vividly, the joyous feelings that she felt at Malden, on similar occasions, and a delightful glow of excitement lit up her usually rather pale face, as she absolutely threw herself carelessly into Mildmay's arms, as he assisted her from the carriage to the ground. "Really, Graham," said she, her face radiant with smiles, while smoothing the wrinkles from her dress, "really this is pleasant, and I hope Mr. Goshawk will frequently preach for us; I am sure I shall constantly attend."

Graham smiled on Annie, and offering her his arm, the two proceeded into church. It was the first time that Annie had been seen in public; much, of course, had been

said about her, in the neighborhood; curiosity was raised to know, "if so handsome and rich a young man as Mr. Mildmay, had really done as well as he deserved!" But it was evident that the verdict was in Annie's favor, for as she came, necessarily, in full view of the congregation, who sat facing the door, a telegraphic surprise rested upon the countenances of all, and it was by Graham observed and felt, that Annie excited marked admiration.

As for Annie, herself, the moment she stepped inside of the church, she felt a solemnity of feeling pervade her heart, that drove all other thoughts, for the moment, from her mind, as she passed to a proffered seat, and bent her head in prayer, as perfectly self-possessed, as if kneeling at her little altar in her own room.

The congregation had been some time in their seats, before the reverend gentleman made his appearance. In fact, the first impression of quietness that prevailed, was beginning to give way. Gentlemen were seen to be moving about, and looking at the door, and one or two went out, while the young ladies began to gaze about, and recognize each other in the congregation, while Governor, and his fellow-servants on the outside, it was very evident, from sounds of suppressed laughter, had got together under the shade of a wide-spreading tree, and were detailing gossip, and cracking jokes.

Suddenly was heard the tramp of horses, driven rapidly along the road,—the whip cracked, at which two or three saddle nags broke their bridles, and scampered down the village street,—steps were heard rapidly unfolded—a sort of kid glove, a gossamer fan confusion ensued in the con-

gregation, and the Rev. Mr. Goshawk, supporting widow Hartshorn, made his appearance.

It was afterwards asserted by some one, careful in such statistics, that almost every gentleman in the congregation rose involuntarily to offer the widow a seat; but nothing could surpass the dignity and urbanity, with which the reverend gentleman abandoned his precious charge, preparatory to ascending the pulpit.

The Rev. Mr. Goshawk's appearance and manner were decidedly impressive, and he himself was not unconscious of the fact. After remaining a few moments in silent meditation, with his soft white hand pressed to his head, he beckoned to a negro boy, looking in at a side window, and when the fellow climbed up into the pulpit, he whispered something in his ear. A long and mysterious pause ensued, while the boy ran over to the Head-quarters, and borrowed a pitcher and tumbler, and returning, set them within reach of the Rev. Mr. Goshawk.

That gentleman arose, and opening a small gilt-edged book, read the beautiful hymn, beginning:

"Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
All mortal cares forsake the breast,"

and finishing it, desired some one present to be so kind as to "lead the singing," and resumed his seat.

Several moments elapsed, but no voice was raised; it was apparent that one or two gentlemen were half inclined, but their hearts or voices failed them,—the reverend gentleman finally arose, and commenced himself. He was evidently cultivated in church music, and poured out

a volume of praise, that even, unsupported as it was, sounded like an organ.

Scarcely had he sung the first line, when a sweet female voice, clear as ringing glass, and as hearty as the birds of the field, joined in, and the two, in wonderful accordance and harmony, concluded the stanza.

The congregation, for the moment entranced at the unexpected exhibition, the instant it ceased, turned, by universal consent, their eyes upon the innocent face of Annie, who, suddenly perceiving the extraordinary interest she had so unconsciously created, blushed deep crimson, and sank back to her seat.

The reverend gentleman selected for his text, "*Be ye holy, as your Father in heaven is holy!*" and he made it appear as if this injunction was one of the most literal in the sacred book, one of the most imperative, and necessary to be obeyed. He drew with tremendous fervor the character of the Great Jehovah, stated that none could look upon him and live, that he filled all space, was the creator of all things, and yet desired to reside in the heart of corrupt and fallen man,—that man, inclined as he was to wickedness, "even as the sparks fly upward," was, by a holy life and godly conversation, to render himself a fit temple, a proper temple, a worthy temple, for this holy, just, and omnipotent Being,—and then in a few condensed passages, he rapidly portrayed the punishment of those who refused to obey this dread command.

The congregation was swayed to and fro, as if rocked in a storm-driven ship; stern, unflinching men, that in the

hour of danger knew no fear, blanched under the burning words, and ladies wept, and sighed, with hysterical emotion.

Suddenly Mr. Goshawk stopped, he appeared pained at the effect he had himself produced. Lowering his voice to a clear, heart-breaking tone, he said:—

"Brethren, think not that the minister of the Gospel delights in harrowing your feelings. Should he consult himself, he would only salute your ears with the dulcet strains of mercy, but alas! wo betide the prophet who refuses to cry out against Nineveh.

"If, my friends, you hear at the solemn hour of midnight the heart-rending cry of fire—*fire*—FIRE, do you rush into the streets, and denounce the one who gave the alarm? no, you bless his name, and hastening on, you flee for your life from the devouring element.

"So stand I here, crying fire—fire—to your slumbering consciences. I would have you escape a consuming flame, that will not only destroy your bodies, but will torment your souls for ever Flee, I say,—like Bunyan's Christian, put your fingers to your ears, and hasten while you yet may, out of the City of Destruction."

Among Mr. Goshawk's hearers was Dixon. He had, some weeks before, come up to the vicinity of Beechland, on business, and having been taken sick, he had, while thus prostrated, almost literally passed through the valley and shadow of death. The balmy weather had tempted him into the street, and gratified by any novelty, he had strolled into church.

While suffering from disease, he had occasionally re-

flected upon his whole course of life, and had felt many pangs of remorse while thinking of the past; and it was, therefore, in a very proper disposition of mind, that he listened to this most powerful discourse.

When the congregation separated, the different members pursued their way homeward, and left Dixon by himself. Although known to almost every person in the house, no one recognized him, save by a glance. Amid all the shaking of hands and congratulations, there were no demonstrations of friendship, or interest, for him. In his usual humor, he would have vented his spleen in muttered oaths, and in a thousand recalled circumstances of fancied power and superiority, that he had, as an offset to any neglect he might receive; but now his spirit was broken. There was something in Mr. Goshawk's manner and voice, that recalled recollections of childhood, when he used to go to church with his good old mother, and on coming home, hear her talk of the feelings that animated her spirit. A thousand words of good advice, a hundred prayers for her dear child, crowded upon his weakened brain, and he felt that he was not only despised by man, but also abandoned by his Maker.

To such an extent was his mind excited, that he hardly had strength to get to his lodgings, which were comfortable, although connected with the "Head-quarters." Once in his room, he threw himself on the bed, and seemed to be overcome by the communing of his thoughts; the acts of his life appeared in review before him, and he was shocked at the scenes of injustice, bloodshed, and

violence through which he had passed, and which he had instigated.

Although Dixon was a native of Georgia, it had been impressed upon him while still a child, not only that it was an unpardonable thing to buy and sell his fellow-beings, but, also, that it was sinful even to hold slaves. Dixon's mother was a strict Methodist, and she had been inspired by this feeling in her youth, by the teachings of parents, who claimed, while sitting under the unction of John Wesley's preaching, and listening to his voice "'face to face,' that they had been converted from the error of their ways, and convinced of the sin of holding slaves." These were the impressions left by a mother upon the mind of Dixon, and as every reminiscence of his life, that was pleasant to dwell upon, was associated with that mother, so also were the impressions she left most vivid and most binding on his conscience. And these early instructions now came upon him with tenfold force, as the only legacy, and only remembered councils and obligations of one, whom, clouded as was his conscience in other things, he still revered as a sainted being.

While in this mental agony, Dixon's friend, Puckett, who had so faithfully nursed him through his long sickness, came into his room, with a pack of cards and a couple of tumblers in one hand, and a bottle of whiskey in the other, and setting them down on the table near by, he turned to Dixon, and said:

"Come, old fel', I have brought you up some 'pieters,' and also something to drink, for you see you can stand a

little now, and I thought as how you'd like to have a game of 'old sledge,' just to pass away time."

"I'm too sick to play, Puckett, and too weak to drink! some other time!" said Dixon, the perspiration starting on his brow, both from excitement and weakness.

"Bah!" said Puckett, moving a small table into the middle of the floor; "you don't s'pose," he continued, "I've been a mother to you for these three weeks, not to know what you can stand. Drink a little, any how, is my motter; and drink a good deal if you can, is my other motter. Come now, fotch up your chair, and let's high, low, Jack, and the game," and Puckett gave the cards, or "picters," as he called them, a scientific shuffle.

"I can't play to-day," said Dixon, peevishly, and astonished, himself, at the repugnance he felt; "I can't play, for," he continued, "you know it's Sunday, Puckett."

At this remark the Kentuckian put down the cards, and laying back in his chair, and thrusting his legs far under the table, he broke out into repeated bursts of laughter; tears streamed down his cheeks, and at last he rolled his head from side to side, as if he was too full, and could not get relief. He found words, however, finally, and said:

"Dixon, by the Lord you will be the death of me—Sunday! that's a good one; can't play 'cause it's Sunday," and Puckett again went off into hysterical laughter, repeating, "Dixon, you are too funny! Oh! that—that's too good—too good."

"But I'm serious," said Dixon, greatly annoyed.

"That's the very thing!" said Puckett, sticking the pack of cards in his mouth, to keep from breaking out

again. "You see that's the joke, one would s'pose you was in real 'arnest," and again he rolled about in his chair, and pushed his fists into his aching sides.

"Puckett," said Dixon, when that worthy had become somewhat quiet; "Puckett, don't go down stairs and blow on me, but I tell you the truth now, when I say I'm going to reform. I'll do it, Puckett, and you may laugh as much as you please."

"He he—ha ha!" cachinated that worthy, but as he looked up, and saw the pale and excited face of Dixon for the first time, a feeling of alarm came over him, and rising up, he said:

"Why, what's the matter, old boy, you look as white as milk and water?"

"Did you never think about dying, Puckett, or any thing of that sort?" inquired Dixon, at a loss to know how to get his naturally good-hearted companion serious.

"Thought about dying?" mechanically echoed he. "Why, yes, I thought about it once, when I got out of tobacker, but I don't recollect any other time."

"Did you never think, Puckett, about another world, and what will become of us if we go on breaking Sunday, playing cards and drinking?—I have thought of these things. I've laid here on my back for days and nights and been full of thinking. I've been a bad man, Ben. I've seen sights in this very room that have made my brain cold; it's awful, Puckett, awful!" and Dixon's face settled into black despair.

"What did you see, Jim?" asked Puckett, perfectly at a loss to understand the slave-trader's feelings.

"I've seen dead nigger women," said Dixon in reply, screetchin to me for their children—I've seen nigger men praying for their lives—I've seen whole gangs of niggers, with their backs all blood, their eyes all sunken, pointing their long skinny fingers at me, and they keep on doing it whenever I'm alone!"

"You must have *manyaporter*," said Ben, with a kind of soothing voice. "Didn't you see rats?" he continued, with an equivocal smile, and looking archly at Dixon. "Why, Jim Ruggles, after he had his last frolic, seed the devil; he told me so himself; said he looked like a rattlesnake forty feet long, twisted all around his body, with his soft jawed and infarnal open mouth pat up agin his face, tongue, pizen-hooks and all; so seeing niggers is nothing," and Puckett looked at Dixon under the impression that he had conveyed much consolation by his remarks.

"I wish that I could see a snake, or any thing, Puckett, but niggers." I'm afraid of niggers," and as Dixon said this, he nervously clutched his rude but sympathizing companion by the shoulder.

"Is there a living nigger as can scare Jim Dixon?" asked Ben scornfully, and somewhat confounded at the exhibition he had witnessed.

"No," said Dixon in a hissing whisper, "not a *living* nigger, Puckett, they can't scare me; it's dead niggers as claws at my vitals," and as the invalid said this, he fell in a fainting fit back on his pillow.

Ben instinctively lifted Dixon up, chafed his temples, and the moment that he displayed returning consciousness, gave him some water. The sick man slowly came to him-

self, and after staring vaguely about, begged Ben to put away the cards and bottle; close the window blinds and set down by his bed, while he tried to rest.

It was not long before Dixon fell into a lethargic sleep, when Ben quietly stepped away, and proceeded to the bar-room, where sat Busteed and three or four of his patrons, engaged in one of their usual games of chance.

As the Kentuckian presented himself, Busteed laid down "his hand," and with unfeigned astonishment asked:

"What's the matter? Puckett, you look as sickly as a glass of lemonade."

"Do I?" said the 'mother,' who unconsciously to himself, still bore traces of his excitement at witnessing Dixon's sufferings—"do I look white? well, that's a good one; and what do you suppose is the reason?" said Puckett, addressing the men before him in a mysterious voice.

"Can't say," was the universal reply.

"Well, boys, you see," said he, in almost a whisper, "Dixon's tuck too much; he's got the tremens bad, very bad; he's seen black ghosts, what do you think of that?"

"I think it's humbug," said Busteed, and with his companions he resumed his game.

"Maybe it is," half soliloquized Puckett, as he turned away—"maybe it is," and then he walked up and down the room, for the first time in his life in profound reflection, and honestly wondering what the trader did mean.

Dixon slowly recovered his strength of body, but not his peace of mind. Unable to go much about, he was left to the solitude of his own chamber, where he reviewed the past events of his life, and determined, so far as it was in

his power, to reform his manner and conversation, and also to make such reparation as was possible, for the crimes he had committed in the pursuit of his business.

On the plea of indisposition, he carefully abstained from the company of his former boon companions; and he was not a person to be intruded upon when he expressed a distaste for society. In his solitude, he looked forward with considerable interest to the services of the coming Sunday; having a vivid, but undefined impression from what he had heard, that there was a necessity, not only for morality but for holiness, he earnestly desired to learn the way that such a high degree of perfection could be reached,—at the moment, no definite way of propitiation presented itself, but liberal charities and alms.

CHAPTER XVII.

DIXON ACQUIRES PEACE OF MIND.

The Sabbath morning appointed for Mr. Goshawk's second discourse, was one of the most delightful that ever shone upon Beechland. Mr. Goshawk was late in coming; he had been, against his inclination, detained on the road, and although this caused considerable uneasiness among the mass of the congregation, it left Dixon more time to thoroughly collect his ideas, and prepare himself according to his own notions for the services of the day.

On the previous Sabbath, occasion had been taken by Governor, to extend his acquaintance among the servants out of doors, who, like himself, were occupied by the light labor of looking after their master's vehicles. A group of carriage drivers had huddled themselves beneath the shade of a wide-spreading oak, and there they sat in cosy and confidential conversation.

Among the group was Mr. Moreton's Quash, a fellow celebrated among his own race as a wit, and he kept his auditors in constant laughter, only suppressed by the vicinity of white folks in the church.

Quash, finding that the minister did not arrive at the time expected, insensibly became animated, and putting his hard hand upon the head of a negro sitting next to him, said:

"Gentlem, I expose to gib you, widout furder circumloquation, a toast"—general attention was paid; "now I wishes to know who owns dis ere eight-hundred-dollar nigger carriage-driver, belonging to Widow Hartshorn?"

"Why, his missus owns him," said the outsiders all at once.

"Who owns dis nigger, called Monday?" repeated Quash, looking triumphantly around.

"Why, missus owns me," said Monday, getting rather annoyed at being made a butt.

"Dus it is, gentlem," said Quashee, "dat de niggers run about in dese supersilious days, and like de poor white man don't know who owns him, consequentially, dis culered gentlem am so ignoramus dat he aint awar' dat he is prepossessed by de very gentlem, dat is to minister de consolizations of de good book to de sinners dis day."

This significant allusion to the possible relation the comical-looking Monday might bear toward Mr. Goshawk, was received by Quash's auditors with a burst of laughter which might have continued apparently until now, had not a carriage, rapidly driven, scattered them from the immediate front of the church door; out of which descended the reverend gentleman, and the family of the planter at whose house he was the temporary guest.

The little church was at an early hour crowded to its utmost capacity, and in an obscure corner, among the lis-

teners, sat Dixon, his face beaming with expectation and interest; he was for the moment transported back to the days of his boyhood innocence, the active scenes of his life in the long years that had since passed had faded from his mind, and a future, sanctified by good resolves, alone occupied his thoughts.

The preliminary services having been concluded, the Rev. Mr. Goshawk rose and stated, that he should that day found his sermon on part of the second verse of the thirteenth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*"

In his preliminary remarks, he stated that he presumed the institution of Slavery was most absorbing to their minds, and that therefore he had concluded to confine himself to its scripture view. That he had more recently been on at the North, and had been compelled to have his attention drawn to the important subject, by its agitation among the people he had so recently visited.

At this announcement Dixon turned fairly pale, and was obliged to disguise his excitement by leaning his head upon the slip before him. His next impulse was to leave the church, for he shrunk, in his then humor, from having the full enormity of his crimes drawn by the powerful eloquence of the preacher; but recovering himself, he determined to receive the reproof in store for him with a penitent spirit, and as part of the penalty he had to pay, for, as he thought, "his many sins."

"Slavery," continued Mr. Goshawk, "is the oldest institution relating to the government of men that exists in

the world. The Jewish people, among whom it was established as an accessory of their civilization (by the Almighty, because they were his chosen people), have politically passed away, but the institution remains. It was ingrafted upon the world and humanity, the moment the surging waters of the deluge subsided and left the dry land to appear. For it was even then that the decree went forth that the children of Ham should be bondsmen for ever; yet in the face of this startling truth, so intimately interwoven with the second creation of the world, do people professing to be Christians, profanely attempt to put their hand upon the Ark, and by their weakness would arrest the decrees of a just, though inscrutable Providence."

Dixon, as these announcements one after another struck his ears, was perfectly overcome with astonishment. He rubbed his eyes, as if trying to wake up from a sound sleep —an expression of incredulity rested upon his face, and he looked around, as if to satisfy himself that he was not dreaming.

"Again I ask, if slavery were this terrible evil, would the men selected by our Saviour, to carry the everlasting gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, allowed it to go uncondemned? Could these martyrs to the truth be charged with moral cowardice? No! for men, most all of whom were slain alive in defence of their cherished principles, could have had no fear. The apostles, if they had been anti-slavery men, would have cried aloud, where the evil existed, and not like these modern disorganizers, abused and vilified the slaveholder, when not only out of the way of all usefulness but of all responsibility.

"The laws of God, touching the subject of slavery, are spread as clearly through every part of the Scriptures as are the stars in the firmament of heaven. Human reason may do battle against them, but the only result will be the most glaring manifestation of mortal weakness. The institution of slavery, from its divine origin, must continue so long as sin shall have a tendency to lead to death, so long as Jehovah shall rule and exercise the attributes of mercy to fallen, degraded man.

"If slavery," continued the preacher, "was a thing as bad as its ignorant enemies represent, why are the Scriptures so silent as to denunciations. Innumerable chapters can be found justifying it, regulating it, yet no commands that it should not exist. In Genesis, we have a pleasing record of the ameliorating influence of slavery even in those early times. 'Judah said unto his brethren, what profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him.' The saving of the life of Joseph was the consequence, and following it came all the blessings that through him flowed toward the children of Israel. We are also to notice, brethren, that the holding of slaves, in Jacob's day, was neither *illegal* nor *uncommon*. We are, therefore, not surprised that history gives us to understand, that in the golden streets of Jerusalem were to be found the mart for slaves. I can imagine the patriarchs of old, as do now our noble planters, trafficking for servants, and selecting with care those which best answered their purposes.

"In later and more glorious days, the streets of Rome, and those of every dependency of that great republic swarm-

ed with slaves. They were at times butchered without mercy, thrown to wild beasts for amusement, and were even used by epicures, as food for their petted fishes. Yet our Saviour, blessed be his name, raised not his voice against the institution, and the apostles exerted their influence, as in the case of Onesimus, to return not only runaways to their masters, but to frequently exhort them to be obedient for the glory of God.

"What," continued Mr. Goshawk, "is the position of the slaveholder? He is the true patriarch; the parent of a large family; his duties are sacred; he not only has the bodies but the souls of men in his keeping; he educates and religiously instructs his dependants; if they are sick, he nurses them; if naked, he clothes them; and if borne down by age and infirmities provides a support and finds a retreat for them. Unlike the employer of the free laborer, his care never ceases, it does not stop the moment the recipient is no longer pecuniarily useful.

"And here, brethren, it is forced upon me to make those personal applications of our discourse, that naturally arise in considering this interesting theme. It is charged against us, that our peculiar institutions encourage cruelty to the negro. How absurd and unchristian is this scandal. Imperatively commanded by the Holy Book to buy slaves, we are also enjoined by the same Holy injunction, to keep them in obedience. The divine law shows internal evidence of its high origin, by providing for the punishment of slaves with rods, and asserts, that if the slave die in a day or two after his beating, yet his owner shall not be punished, because he can appropriate to his own use, his man-

servant or his maid-servant, and his ox, and his ass, and any thing that is his.

"Are we immaculate? are we not subject to excitements like unto other men? Is it wonderful, that having, by Providence, the great responsibility of slave-holding put upon us, that we should in the administration of our sacred office, sometimes, in moments of excitement, punish not more severely than the law permits, but more than our interests justify? Moses, who was denominated the meekest of men, in a fit of passion threw down the hand-of-God-inscribed tablets of the law; cannot, therefore, a fatal blow to a degraded negro be passed by in silence? Peter, who was evidently of a southern disposition, of a chivalrous, noble temperament, in the very presence of our Saviour, on the impulse of the moment, drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest. That a master, provoked beyond endurance, should do worse to that which he owns and has bought with a price, should be set down to the amiable and redeeming traits of humanity, rather than to the indulgence of improper and brutalizing passions.

"Brethren, we are charged in the South with assisting in affrays, duels, and murders. I need not say that these slanders need no refutation. Look at the annals of crime of the immaculate North,—the crime of every day,—and ours sink in petty incidents, compared with the enormity of these *free* people. We are charged with encouraging duelling; but when did a high standard of honor injure the unregenerate heart? As a clergyman, commissioned to preach peace and good will to all men, I condemn the practice; but if the grace of God prevails not, better that

the passions should be regulated by rules accepted of by the educated and refined, than be left to riot in unrestrained wickedness of the natural heart.

"We are charged with not being as good as our neighbors. Our brethren of the North have gone into the temple, and thanked God that they are not as other men; announced that they do not oppress,—that they are given to alms. For all they have done in sincerity, Heaven be praised; but I will simply say, in answer to such hypocrisy, that our Southern piety is unobtrusive.

"If the windy work of blowing trumpets at the corners of the streets,—if vociferation, and noise, are the evidences of religion, we are lost; but Southern Christians 'do good in secret,' that they may in abundant crops, and increasing wealth, be rewarded openly. Our ministers compare favorably for learning and zeal with any North; and if we are not given to sectarian controversy,—if there be a quiet calm in the various churches in our midst,—we have not to blush at beholding the fanatical evidences of misguided and misdirected zeal.

"But, brethren, why dwell upon the unnecessary and needlessly imposed task of defending ourselves against the folly of fanatics and envy of irreligious men?—let us turn and contemplate our glorious destiny, and remember, that we have been singled out by Providence, as were the children of Israel in olden times, to be his peculiar people. The Southern Christians are chosen as the instruments for the greatest and sublimest Christian revolution ever achieved by mortal being. When the poor African was landed on our coast, the slave-robbers did not know that

their apparently evil deeds were to be made to praise God; yet such was verily the case. We have but to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, and the glory that will come up out of Jerusalem.

"In the glowing and eloquent language of a beloved brother, 'I feel satisfied with the tendencies of things.' I stand upon the mountain-peak, above the clouds. I see far beyond the storm, the calm sea, and the blue sky. I see the Canaan of the African. I stand there on the Nebo of his exodus, and look across not the Jordan, but the Atlantic.

"I gaze as did Moses from Mount Pisgah over into the promised land; I see the ocean divided by a great wind, and piled up in walls of green glittering glass on either hand; and through this crystal avenue the children of Ham are crossing upon dry ground,—the marching host amid the pillar of cloud and fire. I look over the Niger, black with death, to the white man—instinct with life to the children of Ham. There is the black man's home; *there*, is his father's land,—there will he exhibit his own type of Christianity. Verily, verily! this emancipated race may rival the most amiable form of spiritual life, and the jewel may glitter upon the Ethiop's brow, in meaning more sublime than all the poet's imagery.

"Brethren, in the ordering of events, the African will go,—the ocean will separate,—the miracle will be accomplished; but let us remember, that we are potter's clay in the hands of an overruling power,—the chosen instruments of great good; and let us encourage in our hearts that simple childlike faith, that *makes us satisfied with things as*

they are, and willing to leave the future to the care of an all-wise and merciful Providence."

Never, probably, was there a discourse uttered by a human voice, that had a more powerful effect upon an auditor, than did Goshawk's upon Dixon. He had taken his place in the congregation an hour or two before with a wan face, sunken, careworn eyes, and debilitated frame; he now walked forth absolutely changed in his physical as well as moral constitution. A new light had broken in upon his mind; he was clay in the hands of the potter,—a blind instrument for doing good. He had gone to church, feeling that he was in the slough of despondency, but was now conscious that, under the enlightened influences of "the sanctuary," his burden had rolled from off his soul; and in the exuberance of his new view of things, he absolutely snapped his fingers over his head, and took one or two steps that gave promise, if their style had been continued, that the spectator would have had a very good idea of a country jig.

The "Head-quarters" on the morning of Mr. Goshawk's sermon had been unusually dull; as Busteed remarked, "The Sunday races, down at Sawyer's, always tuck away some of his customers, but the flare-up at the church coming on at the same time, he was doing nothing at all." Even Puckett for a while deserted the popular resort, and walking over to the church, thrust his head in at the door, and got, what he said, was the "milk in the cocoanut;" and not waiting for the closing ceremonies, he rushed back to Busteed's, and leaning over the bar, commenced quite an animated description of what he had

heard. As Puckett proceeded, Busteed, who was busy wiping tumblers with a rag, startled by some assertion of Puckett's, exclaimed:

"Oh, nonsense, Goshawk didn't pile it on so thick as that, did he?"

"Yes, he did, though," returned Puckett, emphatically; "and the parson went it even a little stronger, for he made out Dixon and sich like to be rigler missionaries of the gospel."

At that instant Dixon stepped into the bar-room. His improved appearance, and genial manner, compared with an hour or two before, struck both the landlord and Puckett; the latter, unable to contain his gratification, remarked:

"Major, you look better than you did this morning—you must be getting well."

"I am better," said Dixon, emphatically; "I've got clear of them confounded pains, that's troubled me so much: I am now as good as new, and we'll take a drink to celebrate the fact."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEATH OF JACK.

Near sunset, Toadvine left the "Head-quarters," and rode toward the jail. He was exceedingly intoxicated, which always made him savage; but, in addition to this, he had been literally swindled out of a considerable sum of money at cards,—and this fact goaded him to fury.

The jail was situated on the suburbs of the town, and was reached by going over a ravine, or, as similar obstructions are termed, "a wash." In ordinarily dry weather, there was no difficulty in crossing the ravine, but heavy and continuous rains had made it saddle-girth deep in mud; and as Toadvine attempted to rush his horse through the conglomerated mass, the poor animal stuck fast,—when, being assailed by blows and oaths, in struggling to extricate himself he fell upon his side, and tumbled his rider "heels-over-head" in the slough. Toadvine was now furious, and as he pulled away at his horse's bridle, he loaded the very air with his fearful imprecations. The animal, released of his rider's weight, recovered his feet, and, by repeated plunges, reached the solid earth.

The negroes confined in the jail, hearing the noise, huddled about the heavy iron-grated window, and were highly amused at what they saw. They made many rough jokes at Toadvine's expense, any one of which if it had reached his ears, in his then humor, would have made him stark, staring mad. Meanwhile, the dogs within the picketed inclosure of the jail commenced furiously barking, and gnashing their teeth through the openings of the fence,—thereby giving additional spirit to the scene.

Toadvine hitched his horse to an old whipping-post near by; and as soon as he could reach the entrance of the jail, the keeper anticipated his coming by opening the door. Toadvine and the jailer saluted after the manner of old friends, and then disappeared within the precincts of the old building.

It was with a great deal of difficulty that Toadvine could be reconciled to his disagreeable accident; while scolding about it to the jailer, he picked up a piece of cypress shingle from the floor, and pettishly scraped the mud from his clothes,—every moment becoming more excited in his indignation. He abused the road inspectors, —abused the jail,—and the world generally, and Jack in particular and especially.

The jailer finally, however, reduced him to quiet, by producing an old stone jug from a cleft in the heavy timber walls; and giving Toadvine a broken tumbler, and taking a gourd himself, he poured out a liberal allowance of whiskey, and giving the highly original toast, "Better luck next time," the twain touched "glasses" with due solemnity, and drank off the contents.

The jailer, still bent on mollifying his guest, now produced an immense plug of tobacco, and handing it to Toadvine, told him to take a piece, remarking, in a half playful way, that "that tobacker was sent him 'way from Old Virginny, by a gentleman that had two runaways in jail with him for near about a year."

"And what the hell did he send that to you for, after keeping his niggers so long?" growled Toadvine, twisting off a large piece of the weed.

"Because," said the jailer, with a professional smile, "I sent him a paper marked around with ink, so he could tell whar was his property."

"And he was from Virginny, was he?" inquired Toadvine, giving his clothes a rub down with the shingle.

"He was," said the jailer, emphatically.

"And a F. F. V.," snarled Toadvine, as he discovered a large "splotch" of mud, heretofore unperceived, over the calf of his leg.

"I don't know whether he was or not," said the jailer, producing an old greasy playing-card. "Here," he continued, without paying further attention to Toadvine, "is the charges agin Mr. Mildmay, for 'resting Jack;" and he read off the back of a playing-card as follows:

"To Mr. Stubbs, who tuck him up,—two forty-five.

"Jutasses feez, for committin,—a 'V.'

"Bored fore daze,—wun twenty; makin a sum total of ait dollars and seventy sents: and not much neither as the times goze."

"Not much," said Toadvine, taking out his clasp-knife, and picking a bit of tobacco leaf from between his

front teeth with the blade; "not much," he repeated, as if in deep reflection, and then went on: "Well, maybe it an't; but if I had a nigger as run away, and cost me eight dollars and seventy cents, if I didn't work it out of his hide, with interest to boot, I hope I may turn nigger myself."

And the sincerity with which he made this protestation can be appreciated, when it is known that it closed with Toadvine's climacteric figure of speech, if he wished to be considered particularly in earnest.

Toadvine now pulled out a ten dollar gold-piece, and giving it to the jailer, told the functionary to take his change.

The jailer found some difficulty in accomplishing his object, as he had nothing but three half dollar pieces in his pocket. After considerable discussion, and another drink of whiskey, it was decided that Toadvine should throw "heads and tails" for the piece of money in dispute—whereupon that gentleman took the coin, and resting it on the side of the fore finger of the right hand, and placing his thumb underneath it, he emphatically observed:

"Now mark—heads I win, tails you lose," and then he sent the silver whirling in the air.

The coin struck the floor with a ringing noise, and Toadvine bent over to see the result, for it was now getting dark in the jail; rising up suddenly from his stooping attitude, he gave the innocent cause of offence a kick with his foot that sent it spinning across the floor, and then with a great oath he swore that he had "lost all day," and pulling a revolver out of his pocket and examining

the caps, he moodily told the jailer to "bring down that infernal nigger, for he was going home."

Now Jack, who had been, with his fellow-prisoners, very much amused, as we have already stated, at the floundering of Toadvine in the mire, was perfectly unconscious that it was the overseer, and it was not until some time after, when he recognized the horse hitched in front of the jail, that the whole truth flashed upon him.

In an instant he seemed to comprehend his situation, and uttering the exclamation, "Oh Master! what will become of poor Jack now?" he sunk down upon the floor the very picture of despair.

"And what's de matter wid you, Jack?" inquired his humble friends in bondage.

"Oh Lord! oh Lord!" said the poor fellow, wringing his hands, "it's Mr. Toadvine dats come for me. He's de man as druv me from home,—he's de man dat got my wife away,—he's de man as will kill me yet;" and again Jack buried his head between his knees, and the tears rained upon the floor.

The sympathy for Jack, expressed by his fellow-prisoners, was deeply touching. Helpless themselves, yet feeling the full force of their companion's situation, and too ignorant to express the emotions of their hearts, they stood around him in silent agony, in which position they remained until they heard the huge key rattling in the lock, and the chain unfastened from the door.

"Here Jack," said the jailer, without noticing the boy's expression of face, "gather up your duds, and get down stairs, you scoundrel." The boy silently obeyed and left

the cell; "and now," said he, turning around to his remaining prisoners, as he was about closing the door after him, "don't let me hear any more of that pslam singing to-night about "Jesus ready stands to save you," and all that sort o' thing, because it's damn nonsense, and I'll have no noise anyhow after the nine o'clock bell rings, and if I hear any, I'll come up and make you shout hallelujah to a tune you never larnt at camp meetin';" and with this advice he locked the door and secured the chain, then putting the gold eagle received from Toadvine into the bottom of a long leather purse, he drummed accompaniment with his huge key on the wall, to Hail Columbia, happy land, which he whistled with great effect as he went down stairs.

Jack, meantime, stood in the presence of his worst enemy. Toadvine glared upon him with his bloodshot eyes, until the knees of the boy gave way from fear, and he sank upon the floor.

"None of your skulking," fairly roared Toadvine; "none of your gammoning me, you infernal black sop. So you run away, did you, 'cause you couldn't bear to have me whip you? That's for treating you like a lamb. "But," he continued, growing white with anger, "Ill cure you of your tricks to-night 'fore I get you home, and if your whining, half Yankee master don't like it, he can settle next day, and get somebody else to whip his niggers for him;" and Toadvine fairly spun about like a top, with the violence of his passion.

The jailer, as if it were a customary thing, now opened a box, sitting in one corner of the room, on which was marked in great plainness the magical letters "U. S." It

had evidently been originally used for packing Springfield Armory muskets in, and taking therefrom a coil of rope, he handed it to Toadvine, who, without any apparent consideration as to the length he wanted, cut off a piece and gave the remainder back to the jailer; then stepping up to Jack, he struck him a severe blow with the cord across his shoulders, and ordering him to hold up his head, commenced tying the boy around the neck.

"What are you going to do?" inquired the jailer, with some little surprise.

"Take this feller home; any thing to say agin it?" said Toadvine, the very act of touching Jack's neck inflaming still more his tiger passions.

"Nothing more," said the jailer, placing his hand on the large bowie-knife he carried in his breast, and eyeing Toadvine with hostile meaning; "Nothing more—only 'civil tongues is best for health,' and I think you'd better tie that boy with his elbers behind him, instead of 'round the neck."

Toadvine was cowed, but again feeling disposed to give way to his passion, which, suppressed against the jailer, burst with increased fury upon the head of the victim now so completely in his power.

"I think," said Toadvine, leading the boy away and measuring the effect of his words, "I think I understand my business with niggers."

"Well, I 'spect you do," replied the jailer, closing the door on Toadvine and Jack, and then locking it on the inside, he proceeded with due deliberation to shut up his establishment for the night.

Toadvine once out of doors, drove Jack ahead of him while still holding him fast by the rope, and thus the two proceeded until the boy reached the overseer's horse, which he respectfully held until the man mounted. Toadvine then fastened the end of the rope in his hand to the pommel of the Spanish saddle, and with the quickness of thought gave his horse the spurs.

The animal jumped, and had it not been that Jack was still at his head, would in that spring probably have broken the boy's neck; as it was it nearly threw him to the ground, but he recovered himself, and leaping forward kept by the side of the rider. In another moment, Toadvine was again floundering in the 'wash.' Jack instantly seized the horse's head, and by main strength pulled him through. The moment that Toadvine felt the solid earth, he again spurred on the animal, and in the haze of the evening he was recognized as he passed through the streets of Beechland, going at a killing pace, with a negro boy almost undistinguishable in the gloom, following close in his rear.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXCITEMENT OF THE HOUR.

On the morning following Toadvine's visit to the jail, the citizens living in the neighborhood of Beechland, were shocked by discovering on the very edge of the town, the mutilated body of a dead negro, and it seemed more than probable that a murder had been committed. The neck of the deceased was not only broken, but the bones thereof had evidently been torn asunder; and with such force, as to elongate the persistent muscles. A piece of rope that had evidently been rudely severed with a sharp knife, was still around his neck, and upon farther examination, a deep indentation could be traced for a considerable distance, along the road, showing how far the body had been dragged upon the ground.

It happened to be that day of the week, when the planters of the vicinity, by general consent, meet in town, not only to transact business, but also for social intercourse, and very soon a large number of the most substantial citizens of the surrounding country, were standing in

excited groups in proximity to the body, and all engaged in deep and earnest conversation about the mystery.

The "coroner" had been summoned; a jury was quickly obtained—an inquest held—and the prompt verdict was, that the deceased negro came to his death by violence at the hands of some person or persons unknown.

This done, the body was taken to the court-house, and laid out upon the porch, in hopes that some one would identify it.

About ten o'clock, the jailer had finished his morning work, of letting the negroes get their own breakfast, while he fed his dogs, with such other duties as occurred, when he thrust a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, and leaving his charge in the care of a deputy, he started out to learn the news of the day, and prepared to take an active part in a political discussion, or a game of cards, the only two excitements he allowed himself openly to indulge in.

And it so happened as he passed along, that he came across a group of citizens in deep and earnest conversation and he knew at once that something more than usual "was in the wind."

"There goes Orcutt the jailer," said Gen. Bledsoe, the most popular and influential man in the community; and continued he, "Orcutt is well acquainted in town, and perhaps he might give us some clew to this strange matter," and with the universal approval of all present, Orcutt was called into the conference.

This notice pleased the jailer, and as he came toward the group, he decided in his own mind that they were

going to ask him, either if he hadn't a pleasant room in the jail where a game of 'brag' could be played, or else, that he would go over to the Head-quarters and take a drink, and he couldn't tell which—but he determined to be affable, in either case.

"Orcutt," said Gen. Bledsoe, after the salutations of meeting were over, "we called you over here, to ask what you think of this murder that was committed last night?"

"Haven't heard a word of it," said Orcutt, his suspicions however prompting him to believe that he knew all the history.

"You haven't heard of it!" exclaimed two or three voices at once; "why, what have you been doing this morning?"

"Nothing but looking after the 'stone jug,'" said Orcutt, with a sort of injured look, "nothing else."

"The fact is," continued Gen. Bledsoe, "a negro boy was killed last night just a few hundred yards from the jail"—

"Up the old bayou road"—involuntarily suggested Orcutt.

"The same," said the general, exchanging glances of intelligence with the gentlemen in the crowd.

"Well, let me see the body," said the jailer, who instantly became an object of suspicious interest, and the party walked towards the court-house.

"The body of Jack, as we have stated, had been laid upon the court-house steps. An infirm old negro, who had, years agone, become useless as a servant, and earned a precarious living in the town, had, in the natural goodness of her heart, washed off the mud from the body, and disposing

of it in a decent manner, had covered it with a sheet, and sat by, a sincere mourner for the memory and misfortunes of one of her race.

"And who is it, aunty?" said Gen. Bledsoe, addressing the old negress kindly, "do you know the face?"

"Bress you, no, master;" and turning to the corpse, she muttered, "he's done gone to heav'n now, dat's one comfort," and then instinctively moved away from the immediate presence of the white people.

Orcutt was exceedingly annoyed that, by an unguarded expression, he had made his suspicions a matter of interest, for he did not wish to have the responsibility of recognizing the body, and probable arrest of the murderer, thrown upon his shoulders. Holding his office at the mercy of political partisans, it instantly occurred to him, that the enmity of Toadvine and his friends, if united at any future time against him at the polls, could secure his removal, and he was exceedingly embarrassed at the position in which he found himself.

Now the usually most talkative man in the community was in the crowd, but from the time he heard of the murder, he had been as dumb as a mouse. This gentleman was Maj. Trimmer, "the great criminal lawyer and active politician" of the surrounding country; he knew that he had a client somewhere in the parish, as soon as he saw Jack's body, and was then actually looking out for his "retaining fee."

He discovered Orcutt's embarrassment, and tucking that worthy under the arm, he led him a step aside, and

remarked, "You needn't say any thing to criminate yourself, even if such a thing were possible."

"I'd nothing to do with it," said Orcutt doggedly, "but you'll give me a letter major, in case it is ever necessary, that what I do say is under compulsion."

"Certainly I will," said the major, shaking Orcutt by the hand.

Orcutt returned to the group of inquirers, and carelessly throwing back the old sheet from the face of the corpse, examined the swollen and ghastly lineaments for a moment, and said:—

"As I expected, its ——" but before he could say more, Gen. Bledsoe suddenly seized him by the shoulder, and with great emphasis exclaimed:

"You know the negro, and you believe he was murdered?" Orcutt was about to resist such rude treatment, but the eyes of too many resolute men were upon him, who evidently sympathized with the general's conduct.

"I think I know the negro, and I believe that he was killed," said Orcutt, looking confused.

"And why did you ask if the murder was committed in the bayou road, when you claimed to have heard nothing about it," asked a very matter of fact planter, thrusting his nose into Orcutt's face.

"Don't speak as you value life," whispered Bledsoe, becoming every moment more excited, "don't speak until I tell you."

Orcutt was then pushed aside, as it were, and he was instantly surrounded by the most influential persons present, among whom there was an astonishing display of

bowie-knives and pistols; and this significant group, by a kind of tacit consent, no one but the initiated approached.

The news spread that a clew to the murder had been obtained, and crowds began to collect about the court-house; men, and boys, and negroes, could be seen coming from every direction to the common focus, all excited and all curious. The keeper of the "Head-quarters" adjoining the seat of justice, was in ecstasies, and this was displayed in a professional way, for, rushing behind his bar, he commenced cleaning his glasses, feeling assured that very soon his "groceries" would be in even unusual demand.

"And now, Mr. Orcutt," said Gen. Bledsoe, looking at his compeers, and letting go his hold on the jailer, "now, sir, we will hear your story."

Without ceremony, Orcutt gave a very truthful account of things connected with Jack's leaving the jail; as he progressed with his story, many of his listeners became livid with rage, and deep and bitter were the subdued execrations that fell upon Toadvine's head.

Orcutt soon discovered how popular feeling was going, and he began to artfully exaggerate things already dreadful; he felt that Toadvine's power had gone, and therefore, to conciliate the influence of the overseer was no longer a matter of importance.

As soon as the full force of Toadvine's conduct was understood, there was a universal clamor for his arrest and prompt punishment. The feeling was more than usually strong, from the fact, that recently two or three slave murders had been committed, only a little less atrocious than the case under consideration; and in truth, so great was the excite-

ment, that there was evidently a strong under-current, demanding more summary proceedings than could be had by due course of law. Many persons whispered apart—Gen. Bledsoe was constantly consulted; individuals would leave the select throng, and go over to the court-house group, and whispering to different men, of repulsive and hang-dog appearance, lead them within the centre of the deliberative body; men, whose long beards and dissipated faces marked them as "the desperadoes of the community."

Every now and then some one would, after being whispered to by Gen. Bledsoe, leave, and presently return with a double-barrelled fowling-piece or musket. The sheriff also made his appearance, and was uncommonly active to find some justice of the peace, to get out a warrant, for he regretted that he could do nothing, "unless especially instructed by a proper officer."

It was soon evident that one universal feeling had settled down upon the crowd. Some three or four who had been active in the deliberations, were already mounted, as if bent on a hasty journey, when one of the younger men of the party rose in his saddle, and speaking in a loud voice, said:

"Gentlemen, we have had to-day the painful evidence of the reckless destruction of our property. If irresponsible men are permitted to thus injure our interests, what will be the result? utter ruin. It is proposed that the violator of our rights, in consideration of his seeming defiance of the laws, be not left to the mercy of its delays, but have justice dealt out to him with our own indignant hands."

A loud and enthusiastic shout was given, and twenty men in an instant were in their saddles. Away these horsemen scattered through the streets, many riding hither and thither, and almost all indulging in the free use of liquor, either from canteens carried in their pockets, or such as could be purchased at the "groceries." In the course of a half hour more, the town had assumed its usually dull appearance, for that particular time of day.

On that eventful morning, Toadvine had risen at his accustomed hour, and externally, as if nothing in his history of an extraordinary character had occurred, he went into the field with the negroes. After he returned to his house for his breakfast, he quietly walked over to the "residence," and asked Mr. Mildmay for a prospective order for the amount of money due him up to date, remarking, "that he had created some debts, which he wished to settle;" he then strolled out upon the gallery, and taking up an old newspaper, seemed to be absorbed in its contents.

Mildmay, after looking over his memorandum book, wrote a draft on his merchant for the amount due Toadvine, and stepping out on the gallery, handed it to the overseer, with the question, "Did you bring home Jack, last night, as you intended?"

"Why, the fact is," said Toadvine, folding up the paper and putting it in his pocket—"the fact is, that I spent too much time, yesterday evening, at the 'Head-quarters,' and besides losing some money, I drank too much—" and Toadvine apparently hesitated to finish his remark.

"I am sorry, for your sake, that such is the fact!"

observed Mildmay, with perceptible emotion in his voice; "but no matter," he continued, evidently not desirous to seem to assume any superiority in habits or position; "no matter, I am going to Beechland this evening, myself, and I will call at the jail, and send Jack home, and thus have no further trouble about it."

Toadvine moved away, crossed the yard, and entered his own house, and sitting down at his deal table, and taking a deep potation of his ever favorite whiskey, and thrusting his hands in his pockets, he commenced soliloquizing, thus:

"I wonder what did become of Jack? I must have been pretty tight last night. I was so infarnally mad about that mud-hole, that I 'most forget every thing else. How *he* did pull, when he tried to get away; if it hadn't been for breaking off the pommel of my saddle, to say nothing of that rope across my thigh, I'd a' pulled him home, or killed my horse."

And giving utterance to these expressions, Toadvine, for some ten minutes, seemed lost in a deep reverie, then rousing himself, he put away his decanter, and looked over the "promise to pay," so recently received from his employer, and after cyphering some time on the floor with a piece of charcoal, he observed:

"Well, if Mr. Mildmay does send me off for this little frolic, he don't owe me any thing, thank fortune!" and with this consoling reflection, and entirely unconscious of the real extent of his offending, he mounted his horse, and again rode into the field.

To avoid the appearance of any thing extraordinary in

contemplation, by Gen. Bledsoe's party, its several members seemed to be straggling off in different directions, but, by a preconcerted plan, they met a mile or two from Beechland, in the thickly growing brush of an old abandoned plantation, which was all that remained of the evidences of a once "splendid home."

Here in conclave it was agreed, that it was useless to trust to the laws for the punishment of Toadvine; that the law was a mere farce, gotten up for no other purpose than to enable lawyers to rob the community, and escape the consequences. It was further decided, that it would save the parish expense, and a great deal of feeling besides, in the minds of those interested, by seeing him summarily hung to a limb of the nearest tree; and also teach him, and others similarly disposed to tamper with the rights of the planters, that it could not be done with impunity.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RESCUE.

An hour's riding brought the party near the "Heritage Place;" the young men rode ahead to reconnoitre, and one soon returned and reported, to the astonishment of every one, that Toadvine was actually in the field; and that by leaving the main road, threading a deep, but not impassable sluiceway, he could be easily cut off from all connection with the house, and if he attempted escape after he discovered that he was to be arrested, he would have to take to the woods, when "he could be run down at leisure."

Gen. Bledsoe at once decided upon taking advantage of the opportunity thus unexpectedly offered, to make an easy capture, and in another instant the horsemen were galloping to their several assigned places, distributing themselves so that Toadvine had no other way of escape than by striking into the fastnesses of the swamp.

The doomed man soon discovered that there were persons in his vicinity, but still remained unconscious of his danger, and also of the extent of his crime. Two or three

horsemen, carrying guns, could be easily accounted for, "the chase," and the habits of the country making firearms familiar; their appearance created no alarm; but when further attracted by moving forms through the distant trees, it flashed upon him like lightning, that a band of armed men were in pursuit of him.

Rushing to his horse, that was cropping grass by the edges of one of the field roads, he leaped upon his back, and, as if Mildmay was most likely to now befriend him, he turned the animal's head towards Heritage Place; but before he had rode many yards he was hailed to stop—turning suddenly, he went headlong down the field, when again he discovered that the fowling-pieces bore directly upon him; desperate, and alarmed for his life, he now turned his horse's head, as Bledsoe had anticipated, toward the swamp, and fairly flew, with speed; accelerated no doubt, by a number of curs belonging to the negroes, barking and howling at his rear; with a bound he cleared the fence, and knowing the country well, it seemed as if he would escape, so rapidly did he disappear amid the rich mellow gloom.

But Toadvine had those upon his track, who knew the swamp even better than himself,—persons who had, for years, pursued the deer and wild cat through the very labyrinth he was then threading; and those persons, conscious of their power, rode even leisurely along, knowing that he must, almost without an effort, soon fall into their hands.

Mildmay, from the time that Toadvine left him, had been engaged in looking over papers, brought to his recol-

lection by opening his memorandum book, and he was, while listening to the unusual noise of the dogs barking in the field, startled by the appearance of Wash, who, with distended eyes, announced to his master "dat a big party of gentlem was hunting down in de new ground."

Mildmay, from an upper gallery, glanced over the field, just in time to see Toadvine's fearful leap, and as he discovered the armed men follow in pursuit, he was instantly impressed with the belief that something serious had happened.

Without betraying his excitement, he ordered Wash to saddle his horse, that he might ride down and see what was going on. It was with difficulty that he could repress his impatience until the boy arrived with his steed, and still more was it painful to retain an ambling pace, when he descried that Annie's affectionate eyes were bent upon him. But once relieved of all necessity for restraint, he put spurs to his horse, and followed swiftly on the new-made trail.

In the meanwhile, it would seem that Gen. Bledsoe's party crossed the diameter of the circle made by Toadvine, in his ignorance of the ground he was going over, and ere the pursued was aware of it, he was surrounded. A dozen "shots" had sight upon him at once, and he was commanded to stop, and reining up his horse, he sat in his saddle a perfect picture of blank despair.

The pursuers rushed upon him, and checked their excited horses so close to his person, that his hair was fanned by the distended nostrils of their foaming steeds.

"Dismount, you wretch!" cried Bledsoe, as he kept his

spirited horse by main force to the ground, "dismount, I say; we have a better way to serve your carcass than to let it hang across a Spanish saddle."

To Toadvine, the command seemed to cause the world to be passing away as a sheet of fire. He knew that he was guilty of some crime, but the uncertainty of its extent magnified his fears, and he felt as if an awful judgment was upon him. Looking around, he saw faces familiar in appearance, yet glaring upon him with strange and intense passion; a confused ringing sound passed through his brain, and fainting, he fell from his horse.

Before, however, he reached the ground, he was in the arms of one of the men, and by the time he recovered his senses, the rope that had deprived poor Jack of his life, was around another victim's neck.

Toadvine, the instant he felt the cord, comprehended his fate, and uttered one long, loud shriek for mercy; but ere he could have repeated that heart-rending cry, the power to do so would have been at an end for ever, had not Mildmay, glowing with excitement, rushed into the ring; checking his speed so abruptly, that his horse's hoofs ploughed their way deeply into the virgin soil.

Dark and lowering looks were turned upon the intruder, which instantly cleared away, as some one exclaimed, "Mildmay, by the gods!"

This name electrified with sudden life the sinking and terror-stricken Toadvine, who frantically seized Mildmay's feet, and begged him for the love of God, to interfere and save his life.

The young man though calm, was, nevertheless embar-

THE RESCUE.

rassed, and turning instinctively towards Gen. Bledsoe, whom he did not know, he begged to be informed as to the meaning of the scene enacted before him.

The fact that Toadvine was Mildmay's overseer, and that it was Mildmay's wrongs the party was professedly about to redress, caused his unannounced and unexpected presence to be greeted with a respect that might, under other circumstances, with persons so excited, have been attended with a different result.

Gen. Bledsoe, in a few and hastily-delivered words, explained the outrage.

"And Jack is dead?" said Mildmay, snapping his eyes as if awaking from a sleep.

"Yes, dead!" said Bledsoe, "and murdered by that skulking wretch who is hanging at your heel."

"A shame and an outrage!" said Mildmay, his face darkening, as he kicked himself loose from the overseer's grasp.

"A shame indeed," said Gen. Bledsoe, his face burning with excitement, "and that he may not serve others so, tuck him up boys, and let the buzzards have their rights."

"You would not hang this man," said Mildmay, leaping from his horse, and literally throwing himself as a shield over Toadvine's prostrate form. "*You* would not hang this man. Let me beg of you, gentlemen, that the laws have their sway; let my injury go unredressed, rather than tarnish our honor with so great a wrong as this."

"The laws be d—d," said a fellow, in an Arkansas blanket coat, seizing hold of Toadvine's shoulder. "If you've got nothing but the law to reach this 'ere gentleman

with, he's as good as clear to-day; ain't he, Gineral Bledsoe?"

At the mention of this name, Mildmay turned toward the person addressed and said:

"General Bledsoe, for such I understand you to be, permit me to beg as a personal favor, that you will leave this man in the hands of the law. The case is too plain to fear that he will escape the penalty due his crime, and to the extent of the law, will I see that he is prosecuted and punished."

"What say you, gentlemen?" asked Bledsoe, looking around upon the group of excited faces—and after scanning them for a moment, he said, with a graceful wave of the hand:

"Mr. Mildmay, that creature is your prisoner."

At this announcement, the spectators fairly rocked to and fro with the sudden reaction of their moral feelings, and Toadvine fell to the earth as if struck by the hand of death.

"Well, he's made a die of it, any how," said the owner of the green blanket coat, looking at Toadvine with comical pity, and loosening the cord about his neck,—"but maybe," the fellow continued, "this will bring him too," and with the most affecting attention, he took his whiskey bottle from his pocket and held it to Toadvine's nostrils.

"You see," said General Bledsoe, looking at Mildmay, and playfully pointing at the rough Samaritan before him, "you see that Ben Puckett isn't so bad a man after all, although he has a poor opinion of the laws."

Mildmay forced a sickly smile, and asked, directing his

eye to Bledsoe, "if he could get Mr. Puckett to take the prisoner to the jail at Beechland, if he were paid liberally for the trouble?"

"Certainly you can," said the general with vivacity, "and I will be responsible that Puckett will never let him go until he has the jailer's receipt in full for the amiable gentleman."

"I'll go to jail," said Toadvine with a humble voice, and absolutely grown wan and pallid with the terror he had undergone.

"Of course, you will," said Puckett, while tying Toadvine's elbows behind him,—"of course you will; ain't I promised to take you?" and Puckett laughed at his own humor.

The crowd now dispersed. All left evidently satisfied, for you could hear the merry, ringing laugh of different individuals, expressive of a consciousness of being relieved from a fearful responsibility.

Toadvine, once on his way, soon arrived at Beechland jail. He managed, in the course of conversation along the road, to secure Puckett's friendship, but could not overcome the sturdy Kentuckian's innate sense of honor sufficient to induce him to let his prisoner go, as was suggested under the plea of "accidental escape." Puckett was too powerful as a man, to make it probable that he could be mastered in a scuffle, and too ambitious mentally, to be willing to have it reported that he was outwitted, when placed in a responsible position.

"And what do you 'spose," said Toadvine to Puckett, as Beechland appeared in view,—"what do you 'spose

they make such a fuss about the killing of Jack for, any how?"

"'Cause you didn't own him," said Puckett with a patronizing manner.

"Perhaps that was it," replied Toadvine, still as if in a dream, and riding a short distance he resumed: "I never heard such a fuss about killing a nigger before. Thar was Bill Stiger down at the 'Oaks' who chopped a darkee into pieces with a cane knife, and bragged on it arterwards, and he was never touched."

"And didn't the Grand Jury find a bill?" inquired Puckett.

"No," said Toadvine emphatically, "Stiger run off the sheriff with a double barr'l, and swore he would shoot any juror that dar'd indite him."

"And the matter ended thar, did it?" inquired Puckett with solemnity.

"Of course it ended," said Toadvine, overflowing with a sense of his own unjust treatment—"of course it ended, and Stiger could have gone to the Legislature the next 'lection, only he wouldn't."

"Well, it's too bad," said Puckett with a sympathetic voice, "that they treat you so; but no matter, Toady," said he playfully, "Buss', Orcutt, and I, will come up in your room and play 'poker' and 'seven up,' and you shan't want for friends, you know—and we'll have a real good time of it, and no mistake."

With this assurance, Toadvine, who was unaccountably depressed in spirits, when left to his own reflections, brightened up, and saw that lying in jail a few weeks wasn't

so bad after all; while, like many other men in a similar situation, he began to realize a kind of satisfaction in the prospect he had before him, of becoming an object of real attention to the crowd about the court-house.

Upon arriving at the suburbs of Beechland, Puckett relieved Toadvine of the hated rope that had heretofore bound his elbows, the prisoner solemnly promising not to attempt to get away, and Puckett threatening to split Toadvine's head open, if he did forfeit his honor by any such performance; "for you see," said Puckett, opening for the last time the knots in the cord,—"you see, Toady, *I gave my word* to General Bledsoe, that I would take you to jail, and I must do it if I help you out agin at sundown."

The ever busy Orcutt answered the first knock at the jail door, and he started back with some surprise at seeing Toadvine safe and sound before him:—"Why, I thought *you went off this mornin'*," said the jailer, unconscious of the severity of his allusion.

"But he didn't, though," said Puckett mysteriously, "though he was at the 'went off place,' wasn't you, Toady."

The jests were too suggestive to the overseer of the dark side of his situation, and with a pallor upon his cheek, he requested to be shown to his room, saying that he "felt sick, and wanted rest.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNEXPECTED RELATIONSHIP

The instant that Toadvine disappeared, and with him the different persons who had been so recently engaged in his pursuit, General Bledsoe turned to Mildmay, and showed by his manner a desire to enter into familiar conversation. The two gentlemen consequently rode out of "the swamp," side by side, and so continued in the open fields, as their road necessarily led toward Heritage Place. Mildmay was himself highly delighted with General Bledsoe, and as he had always heard him spoken of as one of the most influential persons in the surrounding neighborhood, Graham felt more than ordinary pleasure that a mutual friendship promised to be the result of a most singular introduction.

Long before the two had reached the Heritage, all the particulars of Toadvine's conduct had been discussed and commented upon, and had given way to more pleasing subjects, and General Bledsoe had, with exceeding frankness, accepted an invitation to make a call at the house and partake of some slight refreshment, before he pursued his way homeward.

As the gentlemen dismounted, Wash took the horses and they proceeded on through the lawn. Annie was walking on the upper gallery, and as Mildmay looked up and greeted her with a smile, General Bledsoe instinctively turned his eye also upward, and unexpectedly seeing a lady, raised his hat and passed uncovered into the house.

Wash soon made his appearance, and armed with water and a snowy napkin, he presented them to the general, who, quietly removing his gloves, laved his hands, while Mildmay performed the same pleasant office in his own room.

When Graham returned to his guest, he was followed by Wash carrying a salver, on which were two or three kinds of choice liqueurs, and a box of superior cigars. The two gentlemen simply went through the ceremony of drinking, when Gen. Bledsoe set down his glass, and taking another, and filling it with cool water, he drank it off with evident satisfaction; and then throwing himself into an easy chair, with Mildmay most comfortably disposed of, directly opposite to him, cigars were selected and lighted; and after a few moments' silence, the general, slowly blowing the smoke from his mouth, turned to Mildmay, and observed:

"From your given name, Mr. Mildmay, I judge that you are from the 'Old North State?"

"Such is the fact," replied Mildmay, rousing himself into an attitude of interest.

"Yet I think," continued the general, in a musing manner, "that Mildmay is not a North Carolina name?"

"It is not," said Mildmay; "while my mother's fam-

ily name is very common, perhaps, there is not one of my surname that I am aware of in the State."

"Your mother then was a Graham," said the general, still deeply musing. "The Grahams and the Bledsoes are intimately connected: was your family from the neighborhood of Mecklenberg?"

"They were from the immediate vicinity of Mecklenberg," said Mildmay.

"Then, Mr. Mildmay," said the general, his face animated with a smile, "if we Americans paid much attention to genealogical trees, I should not be surprised if we could trace ourselves back to the same stock; I know of no Mecklenberg Grahams that are not relations of mine."

"I am quite flattered," said Graham, "by your supposition; it will be a source of pleasure for me to know that I have so interesting, though so vague a claim upon your good opinion."

"And not so vague, either," interrupted the general. "Your grandfather, or great uncle,—and I don't know which,—just at the close of the Revolution, married Hetty Bledsoe, and we are certainly third cousins at least."

Graham laughed, and replied, "he hoped it were true."

At this instant, the young mistress of Heritage Place came into the room. She was attired in a simple dress of white, and had endeavored to assume a dignified appearance by arranging her hair over her temples; but the straggling curls peeped out quite comically, in spite of her labor: a delicate rosebud and a few green leaves glistened

on her bosom. Annie had become so unaccustomed to society save that of her husband, that the appearance of a stranger brought a slight blush to her cheeks, and heightened her natural beauty.

"Mrs. Mildmay—General Bledsoe," said Graham, rising.

The general rose from his seat, and placing his hand upon his heart, he bowed, as if a courtier by profession; and then extending his hand, he just touched the tips of Annie's fingers, and remarked:

"I am happy to have the pleasure of meeting with a lady whose presence has added so much grace and beauty to our vicinity. At this very moment, I was trying to prove to your good husband that we were some sort of cousins at least; and now," he continued, smiling at Annie, "I shall especially insist that I am right."

Annie expressed her gratification at Gen. Bledsoe's evident cordiality of manner,—more by her eyes, than by her remarks; the conversation soon became discursive and agreeable, and when Gen. Bledsoe left Heritage Place, a mutual friendship had sprung up between himself and its occupants: and this feeling seemed to have been founded rather upon long years of intercourse, than an accidental meeting of an hour's duration.

The moment Gen. Bledsoe left, Mildmay ordered "old Uncle Dan" to go to Beechland, and bring up the body of Jack, that it might be decently interred upon the plantation.

Uncle Dan was an eccentric, stuttering old man, who believed in charms and necromancy, and was looked upon

by his fellow-slaves with considerable superstitious dread. When he was told to get his cart, and the object of his errand, Old Dan rolled up the white of his eyes in the most alarming manner, and inquired,

"Wha—wha—what make Jack done die for?"

"You will hear that some other time," said Mildmay, a cloud passing over his face at the recollection of the boy's fate; "do as I tell you, and ask no questions now."

"But master," said Dan, his face still indicating unmitigated terror, "Wha—wha—what I goin' to do alone wid such a funeral?"

"Come straight back from town," said Mildmay, sternly; "and if you stop by the way at any of those groggeries on the edge of Beechland, you will regret it, sir, for the rest of the year."

"Wh'—wh'—why, master, you tink I do dat?" and Dan hobbled off with a manner that would leave an impression upon those who did not know him, that he was exceedingly injured at Mildmay's imputation on his immaculate character.

Dan went to the stable, and catching a mule that was used for all work, he put on the harness, and then attached the cart; and having arranged every thing to suit his mind, he crept into the loft, and brought down a bag of shelled corn; then going to his own garden-patch, he pulled up a few vegetables, nearly gone to seed, and placed them beside the corn; then jumping over the fence into his mistress's garden, he crawled upon his hands and knees among some low bushes, covered by what was once the shed of a bee-house, and dexterously took two setting

hens, of the Bantam breed, from off their nests; and putting the exposed eggs in his pockets, he got back safely to his cart: and arranging the eggs in some cotton seed, and tying the hens like a bundle in a handkerchief, he covered the whole up with 'dry fodder,' and with a sanctimonious look, drove out into the highway.

Mildmay, who was temporarily occupied in superintending some repairs in the road, was sitting on his horse, when Dan made his appearance; and as the old negro humbly touched his hat to "master," he remarked:

"I see, Dan, you have not forgotten the old mule's appetite, judging from the fodder you take along with you."

Dan covered up the confusion of his face, by pretending to look at something in his rear, and then pulling his old hat over his eyes, as a mark of respect to his master, he passed on without detection. Mildmay under ordinary circumstances would have discovered the fraud, but his mind was too much occupied by the events of the day, to observe all the minor incidents passing before him.

Dan, as is the case with all old negroes, had a way of conversing with himself, and if you could overhear him, it would be difficult, at first, to imagine that he was really alone, he gave such effect to his "thinking aloud,"—the moment therefore he got out of reach of observation, he commenced giving expression to his thoughts:—

Wha–wha–wha–wal, I didn't take de big hens, wha–wha–wha–what was worth something to mistress, not me; tuck de little ones jus worth notin at all—he–he–he—tuck em cause de eggs all done spile by de thunder—and ain't

dat my corn, any how you can fix it?—wha–wha–wha–what you get along dat away for, Dick Johnson (hitting the mule over the back), can't ye see de rut, widout old Dan tellin' you?"

In similar pleasant conversation, Dan indulged, until he reached the suburb of Beechland, and then stopping his mule, he cautiously looked around to see if any one was near him, when satisfying himself that he was not observed, he took out his stolen goods, and depositing them with precipitation underneath some brush by the road side, he hobbled into his seat and rode along.

In a few moments he was in the town—among the old ruined buildings that every where met the eye, was one distinguishable for having doors still on their fastenings, and windows patched with paper, and sashes filled with rags. Across the front of this wretched house, was painted "Grocery," but some wag had blotted up the bottom curve of the c, and it read, grocery, which was really the idea the sign was intended to convey.

As Dan neared this noticeable place, he commenced hallooing with unusual vehemence to his mule, at the same time, by pretending the animal would not obey the reins, he managed to land close against the door, which was immediately opened, and Dan was greeted by a rough-looking white man,—a few telegraphic signs passed between the pair, and the negro assuming his naturally innocent and stolid look, continued his journey.

Passing by a large and evidently a substantial store, a very gentlemanly-looking young man hallooed out to Dan.

"Ho! boy, don't you belong to Mr. Mildmay?"

"Ye-ye-yes—master," said Dan touching his hat.

"Then," said the gentleman, "when you go home, stop here, I have something to put in your cart."

"Ye-ye-yes, sir," said Dan, again touching his apology for a hat.

Without more adventure, Dan reached the court-house, where still lay, and entirely alone, the body of the unfortunate Jack, but now protected from the vulgar gaze, by a straight-sided box, made of rough boards, which had been supplied by the order of the coroner.

Dan sat in his cart, and filled with strange emotions, eyed askance the wreck of mortality.—As we have said, he was superstitious, and he had a terrible dread of the dead.

"Wha-wha-wha-what in de world massa send old Dan down here for,—spose Jack come back agin, and I 'lone in de woods, wha-wha-wha-what cum of old Dan, ha?" and the poor fellow seemed to expect that every moment he should be assaulted by spirits from another world.

Not many moments passed, however, before Dan was surrounded by a number of idle negro gossips, and long and dismal stories and fearful reminiscences were given, until from talking and listening, they would start at their own voices—then anxious to get away from the suggesting cause of so much terror, they helped Dan to place the coffin in the cart, and rapidly disappeared.

The negro, now almost paralyzed with fear and trembling, took out his charm, and addressing the little parcel as if it had been an intelligent being, asked of it to

afford him protection in the dark woods, and not to let Jack come back and hurt him; and he then started for home: but soon coming up to the store, where he was requested to stop, one of the clerks, without deigning to ask Dan what he had for his load, put a bale of rope, a box of raisins, and a cheese, on top of the coffin; told Dan "to get them to his master safe," and ran back into the store.

"Wa-wa-well," said Dan, as he moved along, "got something else in dat cart to keep old Dan company; s'pose old Dan tinks da-da-da-dat box empty, den it's all right: go 'long, Dick Johnson," jerking the mule, "don't be getting to sleep at dis time ob day. Oh, Lord! wha-a-a-what will become of old niggers?" and for a moment lost in this reflection, he broke out in a loud voice, "Dar's Dick a dancin' wid my gal—le-le-let de cotton grow, who car's—old Dan is all de way from old Kaintuck—Virginny shuffle—master's home—keep de-de-de pot a bilin as you pass over Jourdan. Wha-wha-wha—oh, Lord!"

Arriving at the place where he deposited his "plunder," he got down from his seat, and looking cautiously around, thrust his hand under the bush, and pulled out a bottle of whiskey "corked" with a corncob; and taking therefrom a hearty swig, he resumed his place, more vociferous than ever.

Towards midnight the body of Jack was deposited in his humble, but once happy cabin.

The grave had already been dug; and just as the moon commenced rising above the horizon, a few fellow-servants, who kindly remembered Jack, joined in a funeral

procession to pay the last tribute to the obscure dead. As the humble mourners moved along, the simple hymn went up, that breathed a hope of immortality. The body was lowered into its last resting-place,—the cold sod fell heavily upon the rude encasement. When the burial was completed, the old negro workman gave a last pat with his heavy spade, and said,

"Thank old Marster above! Jack's done got free papers at last."

Major Trimmer was not disappointed in his expectations of a client, when he saw the murdered body of Jack, for he knew that he must be "engaged for the defence," for no sooner had Toadvine time to collect his ideas, than he sent the jailer to the major; as might be expected, Trimmer immediately answered the summons.

The moment Major Trimmer entered Toadvine's cell, he assumed a vacant look, and answered every question with the bluntest imaginable monosyllables. To such an extent was this carried, that his client finally became nervous, and asked an explanation.

"The first thing to be attended to," said the major, suddenly finding his loquacious tongue, "is the fee; arrange for that, and we will at once proceed to business."

"And how much will it be?" asked Toadvine, putting his hand in his pocket.

"A thousand dollars would be a small sum for so bad a case as yours; but, considering you are not too rich, I'll say five hundred."

"You don't mean to say you charge five hundred for

getting me out of this little affair, do you?" said Toadvine, gaping in astonishment.

"I don't know what you call a little affair," said the major, rising and buttoning his coat, as if intending to go; "if living in the penitentiary for ten years is a little affair, I hope you will have a good time of it."

"But you don't think it is any thing serious, do you?" inquired Toadvine, becoming alarmed.

"Why, if being in custody, with a clear case of killing against you, and the whole community in arms, ain't serious, then I have studied my profession in vain."

"I see," said Toadvine, his fears coming upon him with tenfold force—"I see, but how can I pay you so large a sum, when I haven't got the money?"

"Well, what have you got?" inquired the major, sententiously.

"There's my horse," said Toadvine, with bitterness; "he is worth seventy-five dollars."

"Well," said the major.

"Then here is a due-bill on Smithers & Co., drawn at ninety days by Mr. Mildmay, for one hundred and sixty dollars"

"Well," echoed the major.

"And is not that enough to commence with?" gasped Toadvine, for the first time beginning to feel that it did cost something to "kill a nigger."

"Why," said the major, reckoning a moment in his head, "if I take the horse and due-bill even as cash, they will only make two hundred and forty-four dollars; secure

me enough to make up the five hundred, else I shall have no excuse to keep me from appearing for the State."

"You wouldn't go agin me?" said Toadvine, turning pale with apprehension.

"I must make a living," said the major, as cold as marble.

"But," said Toadvine, more than ever sorry that he had killed Jack, "I have no other property except an undivided interest in the boy Jo, now in the possession of Col. Price."

"How much do you own of that nigger?"

"One half," said Toadvine.

"And do you think I could buy the other half of Price?"

"I think not, because, you see, ever since Col. Price parted from his wife, she won't sign away, what he calls, her 'infernal rights.'"

"Paraphernal rights," you mean, said the major, his eye beaming with conscious superiority.

"Well, it's something that keeps Price from selling his half of Jo, and that's all I know about it."

Now the major had informed himself in advance of all the property that Toadvine was worth, so pulling out a paper, and a pocket inkstand, he made a preliminary transfer to himself of all Toadvine's worldly goods, viz., the horse,—Mildmay's due-bill,—and the legal possession of half of the negro boy Jo; that being done, the major at once entered upon the business before him, and in less than ten minutes satisfied Toadvine that it was now easy to get him clear of the consequences of killing Jack,—

which made Toadvine again come to the conclusion in his own mind, that twenty dollars was even more than enough to pay any one for getting him out of "this little affair."

After a great deal of "tacking and filling" by the major, more to affect the imagination of his client than any thing else, it was finally agreed that the "*habeas corpus*" was not to be attempted, because it might be possible that the judge would be strict, as the excitement on the public mind was decidedly against the prisoner. And Major Trimmer came to the conclusion, also, that it was possibly safer for Toadvine to stay in jail than to run the risk of falling into the hands of Gen. Bledsoe and his friends; and by way of consolation to the prisoner, he said: "By lying in a jail a few weeks before the trial, it will create a sympathy for you outside; and will enable me to show the jury, that even while the law presumed that you were innocent, you had suffered sufficient punishment, even if guilty of the crime charged:" and with these reasons, Toadvine was content to remain in durance vile.

CHAPTER XXII.

DIXON JOURNEYS ON BUSINESS.

Dixon amused himself while in Washington by attending the debates in "both houses of Congress." He was quite a politician in his way, and nothing pleased him so much, he said, "as to hear Southern members talk to Northern representatives, as if they owned them."

From some of the "M. C.'s" of the "Middle States" he obtained much valuable information relative to the "supply," and from others of the extreme southwest, of the "demand" for negroes. His address in commanding attention from "public men" was much admired by Dixon's confederates, and was frequently alluded to by them as one of the many evidences of his uncommon talents.

Dixon himself felt his decided superiority in this respect, and would sometimes amuse his friends with anecdotes, illustrating how he used these very gentlemen for his own purposes. He mentioned several particular cases where he got possession of "favorite body servants" by advancing a few hundred dollars just at the time their masters were hard up at the gaming-table, or deprived of

their reason, by the long-continued debauch; for he took a sort of malicious satisfaction in getting the better in a bargain of men, who, though at the time overreached by him, were nevertheless receiving the echoed plaudits of the country, for "their great speeches in the national councils."

One night after sitting out a very "late debate," Dixon walked slowly out of the "Capitol" toward "his pen," on the suburbs of the city. It must have been eleven o'clock, when his signal was recognized by the sleepy attendant, who let him in.

"Has Hovey got back from Colesburg, Putty-face?" said he, taking his seat at the rude pine table, and pulling out a little leather-covered note-book, preparatory to looking over its contents.

"He's come back, and has just turned in," said the man, snuffing the candle with his thumb and forefinger.

"Tell him I want to see him," said Dixon, looking over his note-book.

"Putty-face" walked across the room, opened a door, and exposed upon a rude bench, a man with his clothes on, and asleep.

"Wake up here!" said he, giving the man a shake.

Hovey sprang upright in bed, and although still almost asleep, had instinctively, as it were, grasped a long knife that was under his pillow, and opening his eyes, demanded in most shockingly profane language, what was the matter?

"Dixon wants you," was the simple reply.

"I was dreaming just now," said Hovey, putting up

his knife, and hunting around for his shoes, "that somebody was going to cut my throat;" and after uttering this pleasant reminiscence, he shuffled into Dixon's presence, and took a seat on the opposite side of the table.

For some moments the negro trader continued to examine the hieroglyphic marks before him, when he turned around suddenly to Hovey, and said:

'What news from Colesburg?"

'Nothing," said Hovey, sententiously.

"You think that no more niggers can be bought in that neighborhood?"

"I do," responded Hovey, at the same time yawning excessively.

"And I don't," said Dixon, with a confident tone of voice: "you see, Hovey, when you think you have got all the niggers out of a place, the best ones is ginerally left behind. Niggers is like pigs,—them that ain't worth much run ahead, and come into market before them that will bring the most money."

"I didn't hear of any," sleepily drawled Hovey.

"Did you inquire about old General Blueridge's house servants?" asked Dixon, looking attentively at his book.

"He sold all out last spring."

"And old Governor Fenton, what's he doing?"

"I think *you* could get his boy now, if you went yourself."

"And what makes you think so?" asked Dixon, quite animatedly.

"'Cause he's out for office, and must treat to get 'lected."

Dixon, when he heard this reply, laid down his book,

and looked at his assistant for some seconds with intense admiration, and then said:

"Hovey, you are larnin'—for if Fenton is on the stump agin, I could lend him money on his soul, if it was worth a mortgage; to say nothing of that yaller fellow he calls 'Cæsar, my boy!'" and Dixon made a rude note in his book.

"And supposin' you do lend him money?" asked Hovey, with some interest.

"Suppose I do!" replied Dixon, triumphantly, "why, if you lend a man, about such a place as Colesburg, a few hundred on any thing, you must close the mortgage when it's due, to get your money back. I've seen niggers that their masters thought as much of, as they did of their own flesh and blood, and perhaps they had reason to, and they wouldn't sell, oh no! too conscientious —under too many obligations to the darkee, and his dad and mammy before him, to let him go to Louisiana; but they would borrow two or three hundred till next fall, and give the 'pet,' as collateral security—when I cum round agin, and wanted the money, the men would all go into the dignified, and the women into the hysterics, but the darkee was mine, *no fault of theirs, of course!*—'my hard heart!' 'my cruel disposition' did jist all—it's a great game, this world!" said Dixon, apparently confounded at the magnitude of his own thoughts and reflections.

After a few moments musing, the trader started up, and said, "I'll take the cars to-morrow morning, and go to Colesburg myself. There's one or two light mulatto girls there, I must have at any price. If Ragan sends around a ne-

gro to-morrow, with a swelled throat, and a seton in his neck; put the sick cuss down in the cellar until I come back, maybe he's got something catching. I bought that old negro, Randolph, to-day, of Wilkins, and also the buggy, and the wheelbarrows; have the buggy put under the shed and covered up, and if old Randolph hasn't got any bedclothes, he must rough it the best way he can. If that widow lady, who keeps the fashionable hotel, near the 'white house,' and wants a middle-aged, respectable-looking negro man, for a table waiter, thinks Homer is too old, have his front teeth filed down, his hair well dyed, and his skin greased, and keep him up until I come back from Colesburg,—and, finally," said Dixon, putting up his memorandum book, "if any body wants to see me very much, say I shall be gone a week; and now go to bed, if you want to, and I'll turn in, myself."

Dixon, at the conclusion of these general remarks, without ceremony took the light, and examining the fastenings of the front door, and walking across the room, and putting his ear to the keyhole of the door that opened into the cells of the negroes in "his yard;" he seemed to be satisfied that all was right, and going into a rather comfortable adjoining room, hastily retired, and was soon asleep.

Colesburg, although much gone to decay, was originally one of the most pleasant and thriving towns in Virginia. For more than thirty years, it had gradually declined in population and importance. The people of the surrounding country had, one after another, moved away to the south and west, leaving large tracts of worn-out land, dotted

over with stately, but decaying residences, altogether presenting the most terrible pictures of desolation that could offend the eye, or harrow up the heart.

From the vicinity of Colesburg, Dixon had for many years, through his agents, purchased a large part of the choicest "house-raised" negroes, which he offered for sale in New Orleans, but never having been to the place himself, he was on the occasion of his present visit, a perfect stranger to the town.

In accordance with his usual manner of doing business, he desired to have the purpose of his visit to Colesburg unknown until he satisfied himself what were the chances of accomplishing his wishes; for Dixon knew from sad experience, that however anxious people might be to sell their "property," they visited upon him, as a negro-trader, indignation that should have been, as he thought, "equally shared by those who furnished the articles of traffic."

Dixon therefore, on his arrival at Colesburg, wrote his name in the hotel books, and under "residence," put "Boston, Ms.," a bit of shrewdness that had on more than one occasion, answered the desired purpose; and having done this, and directed his baggage to be sent to his room, he strolled leisurely about the streets.

The morning following Dixon's arrival at Colesburg, was Sunday, and after breakfast he dressed with more than usual care, combed his hair over his forehead, and walked down stairs, preparatory to fulfilling a determination of going to church. On the porch of the hotel, he saw a gentleman, who seemed to have a communicative sort of expression, and Dixon in his direct way asked him,—"If

the large church he saw in the centre of Colesburg had a gallery?"

"It has a gallery," said the individual addressed, "but it is principally occupied by negroes. If you will see the sexton, Col. Graves, he will, no doubt, show you to a seat down stairs, and among some of our 'best families.'"

"I am not very particular whereabouts I worship," said Dixon, with an irony he could scarcely conceal.

"You Northerners don't seem to be as particular in these matters as the Virginians are," said the garrulous speaker.

"And how do you know I am a Northerner?" said Dixon, turning abruptly upon the unfortunate object of his displeasure.

"I reckon a man that hails from Boston can't be much else," said the man, evidently delighted with his own shrewdness, "but you needn't get angry about it," he graciously observed, "for I never think more or less of a man merely on account of his birth-place."

"But I do," returned Dixon, his face a good deal flushed.

The man looked at him a moment with evident gratification, and went on.

"I am happy to meet with a Northern man, who has such sentiments—I honor you for it. It's an old Virginia weakness, sir, to be proud of one's native State. If I came from Boston even, I should state the fact—bear the consequences—be a Yankee."

"But I am not such a hell of a Yankee as you take me to be," said Dixon, boiling internally with wrath, yet

not forgetting the association connected with his name on the 'register.'

"I thought so myself," returned the man, with some vivacity, "for you see I look over the hotel books every morning, and I can tell where people were raised by their handwriting."

"How can you do that?" asked Dixon eagerly.

"Why, you see," returned this 'Mr. Pry,' that the *genuine* Yankee always dots his I's and crosses his T's, and writes his name straight along, whether the paper is ruled or not, but the Southerner generally goes up and down, and crosswise, and don't stop to attend to vulgar, mechanical particulars."

Dixon wrote his signature so that it was easily made out, but the chirography resembled the first efforts of an untutored child. There was a want of decision about the letters, that had caused him much mortification, but when he learned from 'Mr. Pry' that his pot-hooks and spider tracks had a southern air about them, he was exceedingly delighted that he possessed this, to him heretofore unknown evidence of sectionality, and with a smile of unusual satisfaction, he walked into the street.

Dixon managed to arrive at the "sacred edifice" just before the services commenced, and walking up into the gallery of the church, he took one of the seats appropriated for the whites—seats seldom visited except by the poorest and humblest citizens. In fact the vicinity might have been with propriety termed "proscribed," for it was generally supposed, that any one who would advertise his

graceless condition, by occupying these "free seats," gave evidence of being utterly lost to all self-respect.

The assumed sanctimonious face of Dixon, his good figure, and well arranged suit of black, caused one or two of the elders to look up inquiringly at his perch; and at one time, it appeared as if he would be invited to sit nearer "the head of the table," an act of courtesy which would have given him pleasure, but which he would most positively have declined.

Before him, as in an amphitheatre, were displayed the favorite house servants of the town of Colesburg. The day was fine, and the exhibition was unusually imposing. There sat the negroes, characterized by every possible shade of color, from the sooty black up to the blueish white, and possessed of every possible variety of expression in their faces.

Some were scarcely able to conceal their exultation, as they surveyed their gaudily-decked persons, while others, unmistakably alluded in no very complimentary terms to Dixon, as a white man that had "got into the wrong pew."

In the front row sat "Maria," the only servant of "Mr. Goodall," a likely-looking, intelligent girl of eighteen or twenty, plainly but tastefully dressed. There was an air of contentment and intelligence about her face that indicated the well-raised domestic. In her hand she held a handsomely-bound volume, which she occasionally leaned over as if desirous of learning its contents. Behind Maria were several ascending rows of females, including every variety of person and age, also a great number of men,

mostly in the prime of life, all looking fat and sleek, and vying favorably with the white congregation in the body of the church, in the fineness of their clothing, and attention to the observances of the day.

As Dixon sat down, he bent his body forward, as if invoking a blessing, but he really assumed this attitude, that he might more satisfactorily scan through his half parted fingers, the appearance of the "property" before him.

"I think," he soliloquized, after a long professional gaze, regarding a venerable-looking negro, who seemed to act in the capacity of subordinate sexton, "I think that that woolly-headed old crow would be all the better for having his feet in the stocks a few nights, with his shirt off, and mosquitoes plenty.

"That 'saddle-colored' nigger grinning at me, 'cause he thinks I don't know where to get the right seat in church, would be all the better for about 'forty-five,' well laid on, and tarpentined to make 'em stick.

"I believe that I could get about eleven hundred dollars in New Orleans, for that young fellow pushing the window up.

"As for the monkey who sits near him, his shoulders are so narrer that he ain't worth his passage to Louisiana," and thus he thought on, until his eyes glanced over the lower seats occupied by the females.

"None of 'em has got the light color for real fancy niggers," he almost groaned, as he discovered the fact. "I should like to have the burning off of them pink ribbons from the head of that 'cook, washer and ironer,'" he sug-

gested to himself, becoming indignant at the tasteful cap of a middle-aged negress.

"If that gal in the plaid dress can do plain sewing, she would fetch more than if she was sold for a field hand.

"Wonder how many of 'em is free?" he asked, almost aloud, his presence of mind being for the moment overcome at the thought of such a dreadful supposition.

"How many is members of this 'ere church?—wonder if Spooney in the pulpit there goes in for the Bible sanctioning slavery? Hello, he's coming out with a hyme, and that girl with the gilt-edged book is a huntin' for the varse —that nigger would *sell*," and for the first time, he took a particular look at "Mr. Goodall's" Maria.

"She comes it strong," said Dixon, after listening a while, and plainly distinguishing her voice above the whole congregation. "Why don't Southern churches buy singing niggers and own their choirs?" and as the plausibility of the thing struck his mind, he made a memorandum in his never-to-be-forgotten book.

The services being ended, the congregation separated into a variety of streams, and distributed itself over the town. Although Dixon was recognized as a stranger, still no one had suspected his vocation, and he wandered down the principal street towards his hotel, the subject of much innocent gossip, the popular impression being, that he was in some way connected with a proposed railroad that a "Northern company" had projected in the vicinity.

Dixon, from the information he already had of the town and its people, and from his own examination at church, had formed a very good idea of the "state of the

market," and determined to set at once about business, regardless of his disguise. With this resolution in his mind, he saw coming toward him a young man whom he had noticed hanging about the bar of the hotel, whose care-worn looks gave painful evidence that he was, from dissipation, to be a victim of a premature grave.

"I think that young man might be of service to me, and as he drinks hard, he'll not be over particular as to what he does, to get a little money, proud as he looks," thought Dixon, standing still on the walk, until the person alluded to came up.

"You'll excuse me, stranger," said Dixon, the instant he was within speaking distance, "you will excuse me, if I ask you what time they dine on Sunday, at the hotel? for, I perceive you are one of its boarders."

"I do patronize the place," replied the young man, in a grandiloquent manner. "I suffer myself to go about the premises, when I have nothing better to do."

Dixon perceiving that the gentleman was communicative, dropped his query about the dinner, and went on :—

"I am a stranger in Colesburg,—came here on a little private business, and should like some information."

"I am at leisure to answer any inquiries," said the young man, "but the fact is, I am so confounded dry, that I can't speak the truth."

"Walk back to the hotel, sir," said Dixon, "for I have good brandy in my room, or we can take some at the bar."

"I will take a drink," returned the young man, "though I have threatened to cut the concern, particularly on ac-

count of the bad liquor they keep; for if there is any thing I do know, it's good brandy."

It is needless to say, that 'Mr. Mercer' (for that was the gentleman's name) and Dixon were soon apparently good friends. There was a time in the young man's history, when he was known as the proudest and most accomplished scion of a stock, historically celebrated for virtue and independence; but the living representative had squandered his fortune, ruined his health, tarnished his fame; was, in fact, a mere wreck of his former self. The opportunity of living off of any one, even for a day, was a rare privilege to Mercer, and he was prepared on the instant to do any thing to render himself agreeable or useful.

At dinner, Mercer, as Dixon's guest, drank deeply, but it was evident that drinking, with the trader, was more a form than a reality, for he never clouded his reason when he had any thing of importance to do.

The secret leaked out at the table, however, that Dixon was a "negro trader," and there was passed among the people present indignant looks, that a person of such a business, would presume to so publicly offend those present with his society.

Dixon felt, the instant his business was known, that the ban of proscription was openly put upon him, and it seemed that he enjoyed the bitterness of spirit that this consciousness called up, for he assumed a confident, a defiant air, and made Mercer's follies the medium through which he exhibited his dislike to those about him.

Dinner over, Dixon led Mercer to his room, and helping him to a chair, sat down himself, to carry out his original

purpose of finding out all he could of the people he had to deal with.

"Your citizens don't like nigger-traders much," said he, looking over some due-bills, taken from his well-worn pocket-book.

"Don't like 'em at the dinner-table or in the public streets," said the young man, with a sneer.

"There wouldn't be any traders," said Dixon, with more than usual seriousness, "if there were no buyers and sellers, and the devil don't make nice distinctions when he ever gets his own, that's one comfort."

"This world is a perfect infernal humbug, and about as full of hypocrites as it is of human beings," returned Mercer, "for you see the very people that have sold me the most bad liquor at the highest price make it a point to be the most busy in denouncing what they call my intemperate habits."

"Exactly," said Dixon, fully comprehending Mercer's meaning, "but about these people in Colesburg—can I buy a few choice servants in the neighborhood, think you? will the people sell—are they hard up, or any thing of that sort?"

"As for the servants," replied Mercer, that's doubtful, "for the community has been pretty well culled—as for the 'hard up,' there's plenty of that, for," continued the young man, laughing at his own conceit—"if there was a nigger to represent all the money that is wanted in Colesburg, Africa would be depopulated to supply the demand."

"But I don't want many," said Dixon, mechanically eyeing his memorandum book, "only five or six, but they

must be tip-top,—no field hands,—highest style, first family niggers."

"A year or two ago," said Mercer, "you could have been suited to a T; there were the remains here at that time, of some of the very best estates, and towards the winding up of them, some men and women got into the markets, that were better people, according to my notion, than the Yankees that have moved into the places their masters occupied."

"Better to work?" said Dixon, with a comical twinkle of the eye.

"No, not better to work, God knows," returned the young man, with emphasis, "but better Virginians—why, sir," continued Mercer, warming up, "there's the place on the upper road once known as Carlton, I think old Gen. Annesley had fifty hands on it, and the estate wouldn't pay expenses; a fellow from Connecticut bought the land, at the sheriff's sale, divided it up into small farms, sold out enough to get the family mansion, and all the ground he wants, for nothing, and it is said he is getting rich."

"What a sweet place Virginia will be," suggested Dixon, "when such free-silers come along and crowd out all your best people."

"They are doing it, though," said Mercer, sorrowfully, "doing it every day—the old-times spirit is gone—no more card parties, no more races, no more cockfighting, no more balls, no more patriotism,—every thing is dull, chivalry and State pride have departed."

"It's all owing to the Union," said Dixon, emphatically. "It's the Union, Mr. Mercer, that does the injury; and it

will continue to do so, as long as we allow the North to interfere with our rights; unless that's stopped, we must go to the dogs."

"I think I had better leave the State," said Mercer, after some hesitation, "and I want to ask you, Mr. Dixon, what you think of my going down South?"

As Dixon was really interested in this young man, he gave him his ideas elaborately, and answered every successive question to the best of his ability. In conclusion of his remarks, that gentleman said:

"On going down the Mississippi every thing depends on how you start. If you can flare up, and make a figure, you'll do—but if you just go quietly to work at some honest business, selling niggers or dry goods, or teaching a school, or getting up railroads, the people will set you down as lacking spirit. The very best way is to get up a duel and kill somebody, but if you can't do that, there's other openings 'most as good; credit—if rode fast and made a short heat of, will carry a fellow through until he can marry rich, or something of that sort—but every thing depends on the way you cavort around—talk about State rights, and Southern independence—next to hard cash, splurging will set you ahead, and," concluded Dixon, in a semi-paternal manner, "what I have seen of you, Mr. Mercer, satisfies me that you'll do."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DIXON'S UNEXPECTED SUCCESS.

The news of Dixon's business purposes spread through Colesburg like wildfire. There was a secret pleasure, as well as absolute pain, imparted by it to a few who were desirous of selling; but among the negroes there was produced a consternation, such as might be supposed to exist in a crowded hospital of wounded men, where a bombshell had fallen through the roof, and was, before their very eyes, preparing to explode.

That telegraphic power of communication, so peculiar to the negro, throbbed the fact through their humble apartments, and their agitated hearts; that the white man so distinguished by his lonely appearance in the church gallery in the morning, was a negro trader; and they trembled with consternation when they remembered, that he eyed them with earnestness, and had already decided which among their number he would buy.

Through Mercer's indefatigable exertions, Dixon was early informed of a "bargain" in the neighborhood of Colesburg; and in company with his coadjutor, Dixon

went into the country, and found inducements sufficient to remain away all day. In fact, it was long after dark before he arrived at his hotel; and after eating a light supper, he went at once to his room.

Of late Dixon had become daily more and more sensitive about the character of his pursuits; he was accumulating, almost to his own surprise, a great deal of wealth, and with it came the desire to be personally respected. He had perceived the marked difference of the people of Colesburg toward him, when they considered him a railroad contractor (an occupation, by the way, Dixon looked upon with disgust) and a "negro trader;" and he felt his business, except for its great profits, to be more and more distasteful to him.

Disposing of himself in a comfortable manner in his room, he threw his feet into the window-sill, and, according to his wont, cogitated aloud:

"I've made enough to quit this business, if I choose; and I'm tired of doing other people's dirty work for them. If buying niggers ain't respectable, let poor folks attend to trading; I think that I'll go home, turn planter, and put on airs myself. I ain't going to help make money for people who are afraid to speak to me in the streets, or to be seen eating with me at their tables: I'll wind up, and quit merchandising this winter coming, I reckon ——"

Just at this moment a gentle tap was heard at Dixon's door, and without turning his head around, he said, "Come in."

One of the servants of the hotel, who had heretofore called Dixon to his face "Boss" and "Mister," and

given other signs of being contaminated, as Dixon said, by his intercourse with "Northern society," now stood in the room in a humble attitude, calling attention by the simple, but expressive term of "Master."

So altered was the negro's manner, that Dixon did not, by the ear, recognize the boy; and turning around to see who it was, could not conceal his surprise, when he discovered the familiar face of "Sandy Bill,"—for such was the negro's name.

"And what do you want?" said Dixon, now for the first time resuming his natural manner, and by its air of authority, sending a chill to Sandy Bill's very marrow and bones.

"The notes, sir," said the negro, pointing to several handsome envelopes on the mantel-piece, that had escaped Dixon's attention.

"Letters to me!" murmured Dixon, as he raised them up, one by one, and read the superscription, "J-a-m-e-s D-i-x-o-n, E-s-q., P-r-e-s-e-n-t."

"What does this mean, boy?" said he, giving the negro a look, that seemed to say, "I'll thrash your hide off, if you don't instantly explain this mystery!"

"I don't know, master," said Sandy Bill, his knees fairly shaking with fear. "I don't know, master; dem thar letters cum when you was gone into the country."

"Well, take that for your stupidity, and toddle down stairs," said Dixon, throwing a piece of silver at the boy's head.

"What does this mean?" soliloquized Dixon, breaking one of the seals. "Who's been writing me love let-

ters, I should like to know? What's this?" and he read as follows :—

Mr. J. Dixon, Jefferson Hotel.

Dear Sir,—I understand you desire to purchase some valuable house servants. I have one or two that I would part with, if the trade could be made privately, and treated by you as confidential. I will be at the cross roads, near the old brick kiln, precisely at five o'clock, where we can hold conversation unobserved.

Yours respectfully,

Brutus.

Dixon laid the note upon the table, and walked up and down the room, perfectly furious. The idea of being forced to trade thus, by stealth, made even his ears tingle with shame, and the idea was forced upon his mind at the very moment when he was in the least humor to bear it.

Taking up another note, he broke open the seal, with an expression of face that implied there was something offensive to be unloosed by the act, and read :—

Colesburg, Va., *July* —, ——.

Dear Sir,—I have been informed that you wish to purchase a few first class house-servants; I have two that I would part with, for less than their real value, if you can manage to get them in your possession, without giving their owners the pain of going through the separation. They have been carefully raised, and would not be sold, if their owners were not conscientiously impressed that their condition would not be improved, if they were set free. I shall be at your hotel at eleven o'clock to-day, and shall

proceed at once to your room, to avoid the suspicion among the neighbors, that I am contemplating selling. You will consider our communications in honor, and trust they will be so treated.

With great respect,

Yours,

YORKTOWN.

J. Dixon, Esq., of New Orleans.

"This fellow," said Dixon, getting calm through very indignation, "wants me to buy his live stock, and then kidnap it into the bargain. I don't believe in kidnapping, unless it be to catch an abolitionist, but I'll accommodate this Mr. Yorktown, and make him pay me well for the trouble—let's see what the next *gentleman* has to say."

[*No date.*]

Mister Dixon.

SUR,—I've got an old negro woman as wants to be sold, and go to Mobeel, in the State of Mississip'. I wouldn't sell her, if she didn't want to go down to that South country to see her children, as is owned by Mister Brownlaw, who, when he tuck the children, was to buy the old ooman, but didn't have the money, an hasn't sent for her 'cordin' to contract. I will sel her for two hundred and fifty, and I think Brownlaw will give you four hundred on his place, as her son is a carpenter, and I'm told he thinks a heap of him, as he can earn five dollars a day, making bridges on the rale rode. Please say nothing about this, and drop in at my house in the evening, when nobody is about, on the Sandy-hill road, f'ur miles from Colesburg, near the

ruins of the old church, with a sign over the door, with my name painted on it.

JOHN HOWE.

"I remember Howe's sign, come to think of it!" said Dixon, holding the letter between his thumb and forefinger, as if it were a snake; "I remember his sign, 'John Howe's grocery; wholesale and retail; cash paid for tobacco and wheat;' Mercer stopped there, last evening, to get a drink,—and take out the barrel of whiskey, and an old tumbler, and the shop would be empty,—bet a hundred to one that that old woman is free, and Mr. Howe wants to *sell me!* but he don't!" and Dixon took up the fourth and last letter, and sitting down near the window, his ill-nature having evaporated, in the multitude of his other emotions, he read as follows:

COLESBURG, VA., *July* —, ——.

Mr. Dixon.

DEAR SIR,—I understood last evening, after church was out, that you had come on here to obtain a few choice servants. I have long since been forced to the conclusion, that slavery is a moral evil, and I have rejoiced that I have parted with the few I have owned, to humane masters, which is a great relief to me, in my hours of serious reflection. I have one girl that has been carefully brought up, and we are much attached to her, but I am somewhat advanced in years, as well as her mistress, and we cannot tell at what time she may, in the course of Providence, be thrown without a protector, upon the wide, wicked world. I had determined not to sell her, but seeing you in church the other day, I have become deeply impressed that you

are a pious man, and as such, would deal justly with the girl. I have also reflected, that whatever may be my sense of duty, the excitement at the North has been so great, that it makes it perfectly impossible for me to carry out my original intention, of setting the girl free, as I cannot conceive a more dreadful condition, than for a once comfortably clothed and well taken care of negro slave, to be thrown upon the tender mercies of the uncharitable world, and be left, as are the poor white laborers of the free States, to starve, and die a miserable death. It would be difficult to get the girl's consent to be sold, and therefore this matter must be delicately arranged; she will no doubt, at first, be much grieved, but we must judge what is best for her welfare, ourselves, for we know how to provide for her real good. The girl is nearly nineteen years of age. Address "Humanity," through the post-office, and say where a strictly private interview may be had. Of course this communication will be considered confidential. I trust I may sign myself, in the bonds of brotherly love,

Yours,

HUMANITY.

"This one is coming it rather strong!" said Dixon, taking out his memorandum book, and copying the address and business particulars, and tearing the letters up with infinite satisfaction, and tremendous "vim" he scattered the pieces on the floor, and trampled them under his feet.

By the time he had become really cool, Mercer came in, and full of excitement, informed Dixon "that he had got on the track of a 'fancy girl,' that he thought would

suit his wishes exactly. I have heard this girl spoken of, I presume," continued Mercer; "if it is the one I allude to, she is described as being so near white, that she got into one of the village schools, for near two quarters, without it being satisfactorily shown that she was a negro."

"Something of that kind would really be a haul," said Dixon, and taking out his indispensable memorandum book, he unfolded a page that had been turned down, as if to mark a particular place, and asked Mercer, "how white this girl was represented to be?"

"If it is the one I have heard spoken of, she has blue eyes, and hair not at all like a negro's, but on the contrary, straight, and of auburn color. She was raised by old Jared Cumings, and his own daughters were the handsomest girls, two years ago, at the White Sulphur Springs."

"The eyes and hair will do," said Dixon, looking in the memorandum book, and again turning down the leaf; "but one thing I am afraid of! In New Orleans the quadroons are generally delicate, their faces are not handsome, but their extremities are a fortune; some how another, the same cross in Virginia, with even less negro than a fourth in them, have big feet and hands. What's the reason of that?"

"I can't say," said Mercer! speculatingly, "some fault on the mother's side, of course. I once heard old Gordy Moncton say, that if a slave could be bred, so as to retain the color and good points of the white, and only have taint in the blood enough to secure ownership, that ten times more money could be made at the business, than by raising any blooded stock whatever."

"I think it's likely," said Dixon, "though the market isn't large for these beauties, and it might be overstocked. —Do you know a man living in this town by the name of Goodall?" continued Dixon, abruptly changing the subject.

"Very well indeed," said Mercer, "that is to say, I know there is such a man in this place, but he is of a very common family, and I never made his acquaintance."

"Has he got any niggers to sell?—that's all I want to know," said Dixon pettishly, for he hated to hear any one talk about "family."

"One girl," said Mercer, "named Maria; she sings in church I'm told, but you can't buy her."

"And why can't I buy her? Tell me that Mr. Mercer," said Dixon abruptly.

"Simply because her master has promised to set her free," said the young man, with some concealed astonishment at the trader's imperative manner.

"I've seen her," continued Dixon. "I looked at her well last Sunday; she would be worth to me, in Washington, five hundred and fifty dollars. I know a family that would give a premium for just such a girl."

"Pity old Goodall wouldn't sell her," said Mercer; "she's no use to him; but I don't see how it could be managed, her mistress treats her about as well as she does her equals."

"Them's the very kind of cases I like to get hold of, there's something agreeable in taking a bad edication out of a darkie. I bought a pet boy once, who refused to work, and I whipped him until I got tired, and he wouldn't give

up,—so I took him along at rigler intervals, and the more he wouldn't give in, the more I liked him, and if he had held out another day, he should have had his freedom; he was the best piece of spunk I ever met with, a perfect Indian."

"And what became of him at last?" asked Mercer with some curiosity.

"Why, I sold him to somebody that had an overseer that didn't know how to manage him, the consequence was, the nigger resisted—knocked the overseer down—and then jumped into the river. It was just like throwing a thousand dollars in gold overboard, when that darkie went down," and Dixon yawned, and Mercer, taking the hint, left the trader's presence, promising to be at the "Jefferson Hotel" with a buggy, early in the morning.

Three days after the above conversation, at the dead hour of night, Dixon by special appointment met on the suburbs of Colesburg two heavily armed men, sitting in a strong country wagon, to which was attached a fleet span of horses. Dixon handed them a bundle, which being thrown at the bottom of the wagon, sounded as if it contained pieces of iron. He then entered into a hurried conversation, stated his wish to take the four o'clock morning train for Washington, and that there was only three hours left for their work; and as the man who held the reins was gathering them up preparatory for departure, Dixon, as a last suggestion, said:

"Get the niggers out of town as quietly as possible; don't do any thing to bruise their skins, or otherwise disfigure them, they are all house servants—if they kick up

any fuss, gag 'em,—if they attempt to break away, use them articles at the bottom of the wagon,—go to that old hypocrite, Goodall's, last, and you needn't be very particular at his house about the noise you make, as you are taking away *my* property—now be quick, and earn your money."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ABSTRACTIONS AND REALITIES.

As Mr. Moreton was one day returning home from Beechland, as was sometimes his wont, he dropped in at Heritage Place. Mr. Moreton had always seemed to take great pleasure in giving the young planter the benefits of his varied experience, and as every hint thus received, was cordially acted upon by Mildmay, it served to secure him an interest in Mr. Moreton's mind, that was not called forth by the more ordinary manner of corresponding sympathies; for it was a fact, that the two gentlemen seldom met and discussed matters of great import, that they did not decidedly disagree.

Mr. Moreton's business to Beechland was to find out, if possible, who had sold liquor to some of his negroes, but it was as usual a fruitless task, because, although the evidence was perfectly satisfactory to every one, yet resting upon negro testimony alone, it was of no *legal value.* Mr. Moreton, after stating the facts, gave vent to a great deal of denunciation upon the laws, and upon the violators of his rights, and "destroyers of his property."

"How can this evil be remedied?" inquired Midmay. "I have noticed, even in the short time I have resided here, that in spite of the prohibitions against selling ardent spirits to slaves, that 'low groggeries' are increasing in Beechland, and the rapid demoralization of our servants is the consequence. I feel the evil daily, and something should be done, if possible, to remedy it; for I dare not now send old Dan to the village, for he invariably gets intoxicated, and but for the sagacity of his team in finding its way home, I know not what might become of him."

"So it is," said Moreton pettishly,—"so it is; these miserable wretches who hang about our towns, take advantage of our laws, and their white skins, to prey upon us, excite our servants to steal, spoil their manners, and destroy all discipline."

"It is evidently one of the defects of the institution," said Mildmay in a moralizing tone, "an evil growing out of the fact, that the negro cannot bear testimony against these traffickers in good morals."

"Exactly so," was the reply; "a law proper enough in most cases, is taken advantage of to our serious injury. Slavery," continued the speaker, "is, after all, an aristocratic institution, and it is inimical to its perpetuity to give the poor white man political, or even legal, equality. The planter, to secure perfect peace, ought to have the power to arrest and punish these miserable vagrants; put them in the stocks, and order them out of the community, or hang them to the nearest tree."

"I fear," said Mildmay, "that under a government

where all white men are theoretically free and equal, we planters can never arrogate such power."

"The idea of men being free and equal is a humbug, Mr. Mildmay; and I trust you will pardon me for saying so, because the longer I live, the more plainly I see the absurdity of such a proposition."

"Yet I must still indulge the idea that such is the fact," continued Mildmay, with the enthusiasm of youth; "because I have hope, that our Republican institutions will yet clearly prove the assertion of equality to be true."

"Then," said Mr. Moreton, who was now thoroughly excited by his supposititious wrongs, and who was rarely differed with in the expression of any opinion—"then we must abandon our 'Southern rights' to the mercy of people who have no interest in their conservation."

"How so?" said Mildmay, with evident surprise at the proposition.

"Why," said Mr. Moreton, with earnestness, "look at this selling of liquor to our negroes. The laws against such traffic are as severe as the English language can make them, and yet they are but dead letters on our statute books, because the enforcement of these laws is in the hands of the very men who violate them. I know that every grog-shop keeper in Beechland sells liquor to negroes, and there are men, otherwise respectable, who make a living by this cursed business.

"Two years before you came to our neighborhood, myself, with one or two others interested, hired a cunning fellow to disguise himself as a negro (and he was an excellent counterfeit) for the sole purpose of catching a notorious

scamp in the act of selling whiskey to slaves. The ruse succeeded; the fellow managed things so adroitly, that he spent an evening in the groggery, and found that a wholesale trade was carried on by this vampire, with negroes belonging to every plantation in the vicinity; that there was a regular organized system of conveying to his den, from miles around, pieces of machinery, corn, cotton, pigs, silver spoons, chickens, eggs, and what not, that could be easily carried away.

Upon this disguised fellow's testimony, we found the groggery filled with articles recognized as stolen,—got the thief regularly indicted by the grand jury, and brought to trial; and what, Mr. Mildmay, do you suppose was the result?"

"Why, he was convicted of his crimes, and made an example of, inside of the walls of the penitentiary," was the confident answer.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Moreton—"no, sir! quite the contrary. Why, sir, the groggery keepers of Beechland conspired together, and ran our witness off, or murdered him,—I don't know which; and they next turned in, and whipped my negroes, and those of the planters, interested with me in the prosecution; whipped them, sir, and imprisoned them on foolish pretences,—and pursued us, until we were glad to compromise by letting the matter drop. No, Mr. Mildmay! we have not sufficient power to protect our rights against these irresponsible poor whites, who infest our Southern towns,—places that are, of a truth, the cankering sores of our community."

"Certainly Beechland is not attractive," replied Mild-

may; "and it would appear, from what I have seen, that many of our planters consider when within its precincts, that there is no necessity for self-restraint."

"Such is really the fact," said Mr. Moreton; "if a man wants to gamble, get drunk, run a race, or do any thing objectionable, he goes to Beechland, and always finds kindred spirits to encourage him on: these towns, sir, if it were possible, should be abolished,—the houses razed to the ground, and their streets turned into a cotton farm, or a potato-patch."

"I must there differ with you," said Mildmay, half jocosely; "I should like to see our Southern villages flourish."

"And how could such pestiferous places flourish?" asked Mr. Moreton, with some curiosity.

"Why, most easily Let us encourage home industry; let us take by the hand the poor, but nevertheless, respectable mechanic, and induce him to settle among us. Let us endeavor, even at an apparent advance of cost, to patronize our own workshops, and we might in that way become gradually independent. I hear too much talk here, Mr. Moreton, about separation from the North; if such a thing were desirable, at present it is an utter impossibility. I heard a stump speech at our last election, made up of denunciations of the free States; and the speaker, his opponent, proved, in reply, that the Southern rights gentleman came upon the ground riding a horse raised in Kentucky,—the bridle and blanket were from Massachusetts; the gentleman's hat and boots were from New Jersey; his linen from Norwalk—his coat, vest, and

pantaloons, from New Haven,—both towns in Connecticut: he made his quotations in favor of Southern independence from a paper published in Boston, and quoted from books printed in New York. Where was the gentleman's independence, if he was thus beholden to people abroad for every necessary of life?"

Mr. Moreton moved restlessly on his chair at these statements, and after a moment's hesitation, replied:

"What are the people of the North good for, but to be our clothiers and laborers?"

"Good for nothing else, I suppose," said Mildmay, biting his under lip; "but," he continued, with some feeling, "Mr. Moreton, do not let us, who should set an example, encourage such false ideas of political economy as are inculcated in the hue and cry of 'Southern independence,' when we are, by our practical refusal to diversify our interests, so entirely unprepared for going alone."

"Are we not independent?" said Mr. Moreton, excessively annoyed; "does not the South furnish the cotton that sustains the foreign commerce of our country? Does not the South furnish four fifths of the value of the exports of the whole country? Is it not our staples that furnish the chief employment of the marine of the North? Our productions that build up her towns and cities,—her railroads?—in fact, produce her prosperity?"

Mildmay remained silent,—and as if sure of the justice of his argument, Mr. Moreton, after catching his breath, went on:

"Is there an article except our food, used in the South, not wholly, or in part, the product of Northern labor;

consuming millions of our resources, and illustrating the innumerable swindles the Yankees, have to legerdemain our dollars into their pockets?"

"And what is your remedy?" asked Mildmay, showing an evident desire to be very attentive.

"I would," said Mr. Moreton, triumphantly, "deprive the Yankees of our Southern trade,—abolish all tariffs,—and seek abroad, and at less cost, for the supplies we now get from our Northern *brethren*."

"Mr. Moreton," said Mildmay, solemnly, "like most of our (I am sorry to say) popular Southern politicians, you have come to the right conclusion, but in the wrong way. I desire to cut the South loose from its dependence, not only upon the North, but upon every thing but its inexhaustible resources. But this glorious result must be reached not by agitation, or popular speeches, but by hard self-sacrificing industry. A blacksmith, my dear sir, pounding upon his anvil from morning until night, in the town of Beechland, would do more for Southern independence, than all the State rights speeches that ever were made. Go *abroad* for our supplies, and not possess a single ship!—cut loose from the North, and no established manufactures among us! Mr. Moreton, young as I am, I have reflected deeply upon these things; and unless we can have towns filled with a thriving, moral population, cordially supported by the planting interest, and honored, and not contemned, by those who cultivate the soil, it is useless to talk of independence, and vain to suppose that the evils you complain of at Beechland, will not continually increase."

"*Mr.* Mildmay," said Mr. Moreton, springing to his feet, and pacing up and down the gallery; "you seem to lack a proper confidence in the South; I am surprised to hear a man so deeply interested in its interests as you are, doubt its ability to take care of itself, no matter where its enemies come from."

"I doubt not its ability," said Mildmay, with decision; "but I greatly doubt its consistent energy. I have no desire to separate the Union, but I am willing to do all I can to render the South commercially free; let us make ourselves independent; and I am willing to leave the cementing together of this Great Republic to the strong bonds of mutual interest,—to say nothing of being by nature and historical associations really one people, members of the same family."

Mr. Moreton had so long entertained his opinions without opposition, and had so allowed prejudice to obscure his naturally superior mind, that while Mildmay's practical arguments had their effect, they annoyed, as well as convinced; and Mr. Moreton, as a relief, fell back upon the reserved field, where he supposed Mildmay would cordially meet him in his very extreme views, and abruptly said,—

"I never can reason as coolly on these subjects as yourself, sir, so long as I remember that the North constantly interferes with our domestic institutions."

"The North does interfere," said Mildmay, a cloud passing over his face; "but here, again, the South has a labor of self-denial to perform. We cannot stop the freedom of speech. Whatever was the original pretension of

fanaticism, or hostility to our domestic slavery, it is agreed by the North, that there is no power in Congress to interfere with the States in the matter; here I am content to rest; and I frankly confess, that I look upon all Southern members in Congress, who bring slavery before that body for the purpose of sustaining abstract rights, as injuring the institution: and though their intentions may be good, they are none the less practical enemies to the South."

"I wouldn't yield even a prejudice," said Mr. Moreton, now thoroughly excited; "if necessary," he continued, "I would take up arms in defence of our institutions. Never, never would I give up, except with my life, even a shadow of right."

"I cannot feel the force or utility of such feelings," was the reply. "I am willing to yield any thing, not of practical value, because I deplore 'agitation;' and although I can sympathize with inconsiderate friends, yet I am not blind to the evil resulting from their influence.

"The fugitive slave law," continued Mildmay, "is founded upon a constitutional basis, yet it is, when enforced at the North, a source of the greatest evil to our good name, and the popular support of our institution. Suppose we do lose negroes,—in my opinion, it is more the fault of the nature of the property, than the North, that it runs away—let us look upon those that escape, as if it were the same amount of value destroyed by the elements, and if we cannot manage to be insured, let us brave our losses with philosophy. Neither you nor I, Mr. Moreton, nor any Southern gentleman, would personally pursue a fugitive; we would not have one, when returned to us, upon our plantations; why,

then, disturb the harmony of the country, by pursuing a right, the enforcement of which is comparatively of no value, while the poisoning of the public opinion of the North against us, is of immense injury."

"And would you suffer our slaves to leave us with impunity,—absolutely invite aggression?" almost gasped Mr. Moreton, in his astonishment at Mildmay's remarks.

"No, sir," said Mildmay, with energy, "I would do nothing of the kind; but what I did do for the protection of our slavery interest should be founded in reason,—be practical in its operation,—and accord, as far as might be possible, with the sentiment not only of the North, but of the world. While I would allow no interference, I would call that man an enemy of the South who was aggressive. I would treat slavery purely as a local and domestic institution—and to come back to our original starting point, by encouraging a diversity of interests in the South, we would find ourselves, as years passed on, less dependent upon the North for our commercial and political prosperity, and therefore better prepared to remedy the evils of which you complain, and thereby do what is of infinitely more importance, meliorate the condition of the master."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FORMS OF LAW.

It is no more than justice to Major Trimmer, to state, that, as the time for the trial of Toadvine approached, he entered upon his duties with all his soul. He had staked a great deal of "reputation" upon a successful issue, and was perhaps more than ever zealous, from the fact, that there still existed such an "outside pressure" among the substantial men of the community, against the prisoner; for this operated in the Major's mind as a challenge to extra exertion, acting with more force than even the "due bill," "saddle-horse," "promissory note," and "one half undivided interest in the boy, Jo."

The outside of the Court-house indicated an unusual agitation in the public mind; not for years, except at some great political excitement, had there been seen so many horses hitched in its vicinity; and there was also noticeable a number of old solid planters in the crowd of gentlemen, who seldom honored such scenes with their presence. Even Mr. Moreton, who rarely took a part in public proceedings, evinced great interest on this occasion.

Considerable sensation was produced when Gen. Bledsoe and his friends rode up to the court-house. It was noticed that they wore stern expressions, and it was very evident that they had come together, determined to see that there was no unfair means used to get Toadvine clear, and that the prosecution should be strengthened by their presence and sympathies. Gen. Bledsoe, and Mildmay, came into the court-room together, and the crowd respectfully gave way, to let them pass, as the sheriff showed them seats "inside the bar."

Finally there was a great moving of feet, and a swaying to and fro of the crowd, and considerable talking and eager staring about, as the deputy sheriff, accompanied by the prisoner, came through a door behind the Judges' bench. Toadvine wore his usually stolid appearance, although he looked a little pale, an effect rather of being for some weeks in confinement, than from any excitement about the result of the trial. Considerable surprise was manifested at the peculiarity of his overcoat, which was made of what was originally a white blanket, with a deep red border, and was so worked up, that this glaring edge formed a border for the skirts, and prominent stripes on the shoulders.

"Some one told me," said Gen. Bledsoe to Mildmay, observing this marked coat, "that Toadvine's friends had determined that he should make a break out of the house, in case the trial went against him—but with that peculiar coat on, he could 'be spotted,' even in the darkest night."

"There is some infernal trick about it," continued Gen. Bledsoe, biting the ivory handle of his riding-whip,

"you may depend, Mildmay; that coat has not been put on that fellow without some ulterior object."

Mildmay looked at the coat, but saw nothing except what was presented to his eye, although he perceived, to his own surprise, that Gen. Bledsoe was evidently in deep study, inspired by its appearance.

After what appeared to the impatient spectators a great deal of unnecessary talking between the judge, Major Trimmer, the prosecuting attorney, and the clerk of the court, the important matter of empanelling the jury commenced.

Now Major Trimmer had told Toadvine, that every thing depended upon the complexion of the jury, and that if he could manage to challenge every "dough-face" and church-going man in the county, why he could get him through, without the least possible difficulty.

Acting upon this well-defined principle, the regular jurors for the term, composed of a certain number of citizens drawn indiscriminately from among the voters of the county, were very soon disposed of. As one after another was called to "the stand," a struggle ensued between Maj. Trimmer and the district attorney, and it always appeared, that just in proportion as the State wanted the particular juror, the prisoner didn't want him, and by the construction of the law, the list of regular and responsible jurors was soon exhausted, and every one had been rejected except a small repulsive-looking man, who had slipped in by a decision of the judge, rather than by the wish of either the district attorney or the ever-indefatigable Trimmer.

The excitement so far had been quite intense, and the result was considered, on the whole, favorable for the cause

of the prisoner. It was perfectly understood, that Trimmer had accomplished his first object, which was to compel the jury to be made up of *talesmen*, or persons taken indiscriminately from the hangers-on about the court-house at the time of the trial, and consequently, Major Trimmer was in ecstasies, and the conservative and well disposed planters, exceedingly cast down.

"If it hadn't been for your well-meant, but I fear unfortunate interference, Mildmay," said Gen. Bledsoe, his face glowing with disgust at the preliminary proceedings of the trial, "we shouldn't have had to listen to this d—d farce enacting before us; Toadvine would have got his deserts, and honest men their dues," and the general snapped his whip with undisguised impatience.

"I cannot think," said Mildmay, for the first time in his life in doubt about the propriety of having done a good action, "I cannot believe, even with the rejection of our best men as jurors, but that the prisoner must be punished."

"It may be so," mechanically answered Gen. Bledsoe, from between his teeth, the while surveying the triumphant looks of Trimmer, and the hopeful face of Toadvine—"it may be so, but depend upon it, if we are juggled out of a conviction by these proceedings, there is a tribunal outside the building, that will not let the prisoner escape."

Mildmay remained silent, while the painful scene of the attempted lynching of Toadvine passed in sickening shadows through his mind, and he shuddered, as if some undefined spirit of evil had breathed its blasting influence upon his inmost soul.

The judge now squared himself around in his seat, unbuttoned his Arkansas blanket coat, and threw the collar gracefully over his shoulders; and helping himself to a sip of water out of a broken pitcher within his reach, he took a cigar out of his pocket, and was in the act of lighting it with a lucifer-match, when he recollected that he was "the Court:" so he put the cigar back, and getting a large piece of tobacco from one of the spectators near him, he crowded one half of the appropriated weed in his mouth, and laid the remainder beside his spectacles; and ordered the business of the hour to go on.

The struggle between the district attorney and Trimmer for the completion of the jury, soon, however, became a one-sided affair. The alternative was left with the State, to have no trial at all—which was quite as agreeable to Toadvine in its results, as a verdict of not guilty—or to accept for a majority of the members of the jury the very individuals, whom Trimmer had so artfully managed to have conveniently at hand.

As the seventh juror took his seat, Trimmer sank back in his chair, seemingly relieved of much anxiety. He had up to this moment wrangled and "speechified," and quoted law—coaxed the judge, bullied the jurors—and gone off occasionally into his stereotyped flights of eloquence, as if he were on the stump; but a benign smile now played upon his lips: it was evident that a load was taken from his mind,—a majority of the jury had been sworn in, who were, according to his purpose, the very best men. And, therefore, relaxing from his severe labor, he requested a young lawyer—a relative of his,

who was near by—to relieve him for a while of the labor of cross-questioning and challenging.

"Don't," said the major, giving his friend a hint—"don't let a single man on the jury, if you can help it, that has got a cleanly-shaved face; as a general thing, that kind of peculiarity is good for a witness in a civil case, if he's on your side, but a bad symptom, if you are defending for murder.

"Be careful," he added, in the very profuseness of his genius, "not to let slip through your hands any fellow that wears his coat buttoned around his throat so as to conceal his linen, if he has any; and be particularly fond of any one whose eyes are inflamed, and bruised a little: and, more than all, don't let a fellow in that's got much forehead. Flat-headed jurors, with all their brains behind their ears, are the thing for murder cases,—recollect *that*;" and the major again relapsed into a momentary quiet.

It was, however, useless; the moment that a candidate for the jury was placed under the official crossfire, Major Trimmer was again upon his feet, and performing his duties with characteristic zeal.

The eleventh juror had finally taken his place, and the audience had become somewhat fatigued with the same routine of amusement, when it was discovered that every eligible person present not already sworn in as a juror, had been "rejected;" and the Court ordered the sheriff to go literally out in the highways and byways for the material to make up the "precious dozen."

Now there was living in the vicinity of the court-

house, a hard-working and ingenious mechanic—a saddler by trade, who adorned the name of Buatt. This person never left his shop except on business, and he was often heard to say, "that all he wanted in this world, was plenty of work, and no one to interfere with his attending to it."

To Buatt, singular as it may at first appear, the sheriff was the great terror of his life. Not that Buatt owed a cent in the world,—far from it; he was the model of promptness in the payment of debts;—not that he ever got into brawls, for he was, being truly brave, one of the most quiet men in the community;—but when the sheriff wanted a juror, and none could be found, Buatt was his last, but certain resource: and in this way, the saddler was defrauded of his time, and consequently, out of his money.

This sacrifice of Buatt to the public had become in Beechland a standing joke, for there was rarely a tedious trial in prospect, but that the poor fellow was subpœnaed as a juror, until, finally, in self-defence, he had laid it down as a solemn principle, to "hang," every jury he might be on; and to such an extent, in his grievances, had he carried this determination, that Buatt looked upon all trials as mere farces, to involve him in annoyances,—rob clients of their money, and jurymen of their time,—and nothing more; the solemnity and importance that should attach to them had long since passed from his mind.

On the occasion of the "Toadvine trial," he was as usual hard at work in his shop,—a great many little jobs naturally coming in, from the unusual crowd of people

about the court-house,—when the deputy sheriff laid an order before him, to attend the Court. On ordinary occasions he would have been furious at such a summons, but never dreaming how much he was needed, he concluded to "step around," go through the form of being "qualified," and then be dismissed with the usual laugh, and thus be left quietly to attend to his business; and in this humor, and much to the surprise of the "deputy," Buatt with alacrity left his work-bench, and accompanied the officer of the Court.

When the saddler presented himself, a general laugh ensued: "There's the old stand-by," whispered one; "He's part of the law," suggested another; and this feeling finally burst forth in loud applause. The sheriff looked out of the window, cried "Silence!" and the legal dispute began.

Buatt still feeling perfectly conscious that he would be rejected, and Major Trimmer and the district attorney being under the same delusion, two or three questions were asked, which Buatt answered in a careless manner, when, to the astonishment of every person, the judge accepted of Buatt as a juror,—the mutual challenges of the two lawyers to the contrary notwithstanding.

The evident annoyance of the "victim," as he took his seat, was irresistibly comic; and as he completed the jury, another round of applause was given, which "the Court," with a singularly bland smile, desired would not again be repeated,—but which desire was instantly disregarded, as Buatt arose, and addressing the judge by his given name, said,—

"Jo, if you will keep me here in this d—d box, send somebody around to lock up my shop."

"Order! order!" cried the sheriff, while the judge suddenly burying his face in a law book, pretended not to have heard the expression, so much calculated to infringe upon his dignity.

A few moments of confusion followed, as the spectators sighed out their relief that the jury was at length empanelled, and that a new act would commence, of what General Bledsoe now pronounced to be, a "contemptible legal farce."

The judge now asked if the parties interested in "The State *vs.* Toadvine," were ready for trial; and being answered in the affirmative, with some other very unmeaning preliminaries, the clerk proceeded to read the usual indictment.

The district attorney then rose, and "opened the case." He briefly and clearly stated to the jury the nature of the crime charged against the prisoner, declaring, that although the person murdered was civilly treated as property, he was as to crimes and offences considered as a person. He further defined murder to be, according to Sir Edward Coke, "when a person of sound memory and discretion unlawfully killeth any reasonable creature, being in, and under, the king's peace, with malice aforethought, either express or implied." The district attorney then stated the facts of the case, and said, that he believed he could prove them by an unusual array of truthful witnesses.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TESTIMONY.

The first witness called was the jailer. Upon the announcement of his name by the sheriff, he promptly made his appearance; and as he was so often a witness in one way and another, he looked around as complacently as the "Court" itself. The clerk held out the Bible, on which the jailer in a professional manner placed his hand, when the subordinate official said, "Mr. Orcutt, you swear before Almighty God, and these witnesses, that you will e-l-d-h-a-r-truth-p-s-d-r-u-m-c-l-w-s-d-i-y-and-r-t-v-u-a-h-e-r," whereupon Mr. Orcutt delicately kissed his own fingers, instead of the book, the district attorney, in a solemn voice, then asked:

"Mr. Orcutt, you are jailer of Beechland, I believe?"

"That's the understanding, considering you have known the fact for eleven years," said Orcutt, with a grin.

"May it please the Court," said the major, swinging round his arms, in sympathy with a burst of eloquence which he could, but did not utter; "may it please the Court, that the witness answers in a respectful manner."

"The Court" temporarily relieved its mouth of a

large amount of half-masticated "Old Kaintuck," and said, "that it was expected, and he hoped the gentleman would understand, that —— ——," and the rest of the Court's remarks were lost in the sheriff's crying "Silence!" on account of a horse "squealing" on the outside of the building.

Mr. Orcutt went on:—"Mr. Toadvine come to me just at dark for the boy Jack, and I delivered him up, knowing Mr. Toadvine to be Mr. Mildmay's overseer." The jailer then gave his version of Toadvine's taking the negro out of the jail,—leaving the impression on the mind of the jury, however, that Toadvine did it in the most considerate manner; at the same time, he was most positive that after he closed the jail door, he knew nothing—saw nothing, of Toadvine's actions or treatment of the negro. The piece of rope that was found round Jack's neck, was acknowledged by Orcutt to be of the same coil in his possession.

"Was the prisoner intoxicated at the time he came for Jack?" asked the district attorney, supposing that Major Trimmer had done with the witness.

"I object to that question!" said Major Trimmer, looking very fierce.

"If the Court please," returned the district attorney, "I will finish my examination uninterrupted, and then hand the witness over to the defence."

"Was the prisoner intoxicated, Mr. Orcutt?" repeated the district attorney.

Orcutt looked confused. "Remember you are under oath!" suggested "his honor," picking his teeth with a jack-knife.

"Mr. Toadvine was slightly, very slightly elevated!" said Orcutt, after much hesitation.

"What do you mean by 'elevated,' Mr. Orcutt?" asked the district attorney, appearing entirely at a loss as to the witness's meaning.

Orcutt scratched his head, looked despairingly around, stared at Major Trimmer, then at the Court, and finally said: "By 'elevated,' I mean that Mr. Toadvine 'felt well.'"

The district attorney now "begged" the Court to order the witness to answer the question direct, and he again repeated it, with unusual emphasis on the word 'intoxicated.'

"Perhaps," said Orcutt, "he mought have been 'considerable,' and he mought not—people as stay at the 'Head-quarters' all the afternoon, if they participate at all, get somewhat 'anti-fogmatic,' but not always. Toadvine was 'straight,' now I remember, for we tossed coppers for an odd quarter (great sensation with Major Trimmer), and Toadvine knew which side his bread was buttered, as quick as the soberest man as ever was in Beechland."

"You can go!" said the district attorney, who, catching Gen. Bledsoe's eye at the instant, assumed a look of disgust at Orcutt's evident unwillingness to state a single fact.

"You perceive, gentlemen of the jury," now chimed in Major Trimmer, "that the prosecutor's own witness acknowledges that Mr. Toadvine was 'straight,' when he went for the negro boy Jack."

"Why didn't Orcutt say Toadvine was drunk, at once," said Withers, the juryman, to Buatt, "for what harm would that have been?"

Gen. Bledsoe, after taking the oath, was requested to state, by the district attorney, what he knew of the finding of Jack's body.

The general, in a clear voice, and very decided manner, stated that he was one of the very first persons that came upon the body of the deceased; that it was evident to the dullest intellect, from the very deep furrow, made for more than a hundred yards in the soft mud, and the appearance of the body itself, that it had been dragged swiftly all that long distance. He further stated, that he assisted with his own hands in taking the rope off of the deceased's neck, and that he found the spinal column not only broken from the base of the skull, but that the muscles of the neck had been extraordinarily stretched, while in the act of sustaining the dragging weight of the body. As Gen. Bledsoe was a very wealthy man, and given to taking the law in his own hands, where he was personally concerned; he escaped, of course, any undue cross-questioning from Major Trimmer.

Graham Mildmay was next called. After being sworn, he stated that he knew nothing of the murder, until informed of it by Gen. Bledsoe, and other gentlemen. He testified that the boy Jack was, in his estimation, a harmless, inoffensive negro; that he had never been, to his knowledge, whipped for disobedience. That he was satisfied that his running away was more from ignorance of the consequences, than any thing else; and that it would

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probably not have occurred, had he been on his plantation at the time."

"Do you not consider that Mr. Toadvine was unnecessarily severe, as an overseer?" asked the district attorney.

"If I had so thought him to be," answered Mildmay, "I should not have employed him on my place. It was not until since he left me, that I have become aware of the difficulties he had in managing my negroes. Without wishing to interfere with proper discipline," continued Mildmay, "I must think that Mr. Toadvine was not always considerate, and that he acted frequently from impulses which overcame his judgment."

Two witnesses, much to Major Trimmer's astonishment, were now brought in by the district attorney, who testified, that they saw a man on the night of the murder, going out of Beechland, with a negro tied by a rope around the neck, following close behind his horse; but neither would say positively, that it was Toadvine. In fact, they both exhibited great consternation, and seemed to be afraid of committing themselves against the prisoner, being possessed of an idea in their minds, that the law was powerless to protect them against the vengeance of Toadvine's friends, in case he was convicted on their testimony; and beyond the fact, that they saw a man going out of town with a negro, on the night of the murder, nothing positive was elicited.

Major Trimmer (who had been nervously watching the progress of the trial, and was exceedingly embarrassed, not only by the testimony, but also by the respectability of the witnesses, which kept him from displaying his favorite

science of cross-questioning and annoying them), now took the case, for the moment, in his own hands, and brought forward his witnesses.

The first witness for the defence was Stubbs, the owner of the negro-catching dogs. He took his place at the stand, and went through the, to him, unnecessary form of an oath; and was requested by Major Trimmer, to be so kind as to state to the jury what he knew of the boy Jack.

Stubbs, who had been by Major Trimmer designedly kept in the bar-room of the "Head-quarters," until Mildmay's testimony had been given, got up, perfectly prepared to answer Major Trimmer's leading questions, without regard to their meaning or effect, which would not have been the case, had he known all the particulars; for he knew he was dependent upon the planters for his business, and therefore did not like to offend them. As it was, Major Trimmer "pumped" Stubbs to his heart's content, and concluded as follows:

"It has been stated, Mr. Stubbs, that Jack was a very good negro. When you arrested him, what took place?"

"Why you see," said Stubbs, counting the ends of his fingers in his embarrassment, "you see, that I thinks all runaways is dangerous. Why? 'cause they mostly go armed with 'bowies.'"

"Exactly so!" said Major Trimmer, highly delighted. "All runaways are dangerous, gentlemen of the jury, and wear 'bowies,'—please remember that, gentlemen!" and thus saying, the major requested Stubbs to go on.

"I warn't, when I cotch't Jack, if that was his name, arter any of Mr. Mildmay's niggers; I was, at the time, a

trailin' for old Phil Spartan's 'Juba George,' as has been out nigh on to a year already, and has some way of deceivin' the dogs, or keepin' them from tarin' him down."

"Never mind about that, now!" said the district attorney, sort of waking up.

"As I said, I was a trailin' for 'Juba George,' when Tiger opened on a hot scent, and Terror gave a yelp as made me yell with pride at the dog's smartness; and the hull pack commenced singing beautiful, and runnin' along as true as a bee-line, when what should turn up but this 'ere nigger as died, when Mr. Toadvine was a takin' him home."

"Address the jury!" said the Court, unfolding out of a sort of stupid doze.

"As I was saying," continued Stubbs, turning to the jury, and now becoming quite interested, "the dogs was a runnin' as fine as a ha'r, when this Jack sprung up, leaped like a deer over a tree, gave a yell and was off; but it was no go, he come to bay in five minutes, and fou't beautiful; I think Tige' broke out one of his front teeth a holdin' on, and Bruiser got crippled for a week, and if that ain't a dangersome nigger, I'd like to see one as is."

"Then you think," said Major Trimmer, with a slow, hesitating voice, "that this boy, Jack, was really of bad character, and would resist if even proper discipline was enforced upon him?"

"I think I've tuck many niggers as guv up easier than him."

The sheriff then called Mr. Busteed, and the proprietor of the well-known "Head-quarters" presented himself.

It was a saying among the younger members of the bar, that Busteed was a "standing witness," and Buatt, a "permanent juryman," and that the two ought to enter into business together, in these official capacities, and get a heavy salary for their services. The fact was, that most difficulties in Beechland commenced at the "Head-quarters," or could be traced directly to that popular place of resort, consequently, Busteed's testimony was always necessary, and what was most unaccountable to people of weak minds, he was always on the part of the "prosecuted," or as he said, "taking up for them as was imposed on by the law."

"Was Mr. Toadvine intoxicated on the evening that he took Jack out of jail?" asked Major Trimmer.

"How can I tell when a man's 'toxicated?" replied Busteed, with the air of an injured man.

"But you must have some notion of such a thing!" suggested Major Trimmer.

"Not a bit of it!" said Busteed, with a confident air, at the same time lolling against the front of the judge's stand. "People that are fools enough to drink *bad* liquor will get sick, and that's what I tells my customers whenever I see 'em going to 'imbibe' at places they don't know about; besides, how can I know when a man's intoxicated,—thar's Judge Burley can carry just as much as he can git down, without a winkin', and then there's others as will keel up at the first glass."

"I wish to know whether Mr. Toadvine left your house sober, or not?" said Major Trimmer, affecting (as had

been previously arranged with Busteed), to be very much irritated at the witness's evasions.

"Mr. Toadvine left my house as sober as any gentlemen do, and always does, and would!" replied Busteed, authoritatively.

"Wasn't he much annoyed on the evening referred to, by losses at cards?" asked the district attorney, looking at a piece of paper handed to him by Gen. Bledsoe.

"I demand protection of the Court for my client!" exclaimed Major Trimmer, with great animation. "Protection, may it please your honor, from inquisitorial and improper questions. Whether or no my client plays cards, is a private affair,—and the witness should not answer."

The judge, who, as we have before hinted, was getting very sleepy, on account of not being able to smoke while on the bench, and who had been, half the whole time of the proceedings, almost oblivious to what was going on before him, now roused himself, and discharging his tobacco on the floor, and tasting of the water before him, as if its primitive purity was nauseating to the last degree, he put on his spectacles in a careful manner, looked Busteed full in the face, and solemnly said:

"The Court will see that not only the witnesses are protected, but also that the bar and the bench are respected."

This sudden ebullition of official dignity had a great effect on the spectators; many of them stopped talking and laughing, and things would for the moment have been quiet calm and dignified, had not the sheriff startled the

crowd by bawling at the top of his voice, "Silence! silence!—Mr. Orcutt! Mr. Orcutt!"

The worthy jailer at the sound came rushing out of the "Head-quarters," where he had been looking after Busteed's customers, while that gentleman was "legally engaged; and mounting the witnesses' stand, almost entirely out of breath, he wiped his lips with his coat-sleeve, and observed to the clerk, that "he was ready to take a swar."

The clerk reminded Mr. Orcutt that he was still under the weighty responsibility of an oath, as a witness in the case of the State *v.* Toadvine, and that the form alluded to would not be repeated.

"Mr. Orcutt," said Major Trimmer, rising with dignity, and opening a volume of Blackstone, which he held upside down in his hands; Mr. Orcutt, please state to this honorable jury, whether or no the boy Jack was sick while under your charge in jail?"

"He wasn't sick as I knows on," returned the witness, eyeing Trimmer intently, as much as to ask, "Why didn't you post me up before the trial on this point?—what are you driving at?"

"You say," said Major Trimmer, looking very earnest, and seizing a pen, that the boy was not sick?"

"No, I don't, though," said Orcutt, brightening up; "I don't say nothing of the kind, because I wouldn't say under oath of niggers in jail, that the wellest-looking of them wasn't sick."

"Then there is a great deal of sickness in the jail?"

"Why, generally thar is 'mong the runaways when

they first come in, for although they get better victuals with us, they get less air and exercise."

"And the boy Jack suffered as others do?"

"He did complain of the dog-bite on the calf of his leg, but nothing more, as I recollect."

"Are you sure, Mr. Orcutt, that none of the prisoners were sick with cholera?"

The jailer reflected for a few seconds, and said, "that he believed one of the prisoners was troubled that way; but which one, he didn't know:" and with this answer, he retired.

"Colonel Price!" shouted the sheriff; and the name was no sooner uttered, than that portly worthy presented himself. Major Trimmer, who seemed to be very much delighted with "the colonel's" appearance, asked the witness:—

"Do you think, Colonel Price, that Mr. Toadvine is a mild or a severe man with niggers?"

"Mild—very mild," replied the colonel.

"What reason, Colonel Price, have you for declaring Mr. Toadvine to be 'mild—*very mild?*'"

"'Cause he'd let niggers off for nothing that 'ud get staked down by me, and have forty," replied the colonel, flushing with excitement.

"Colonel Price," said the district attorney, "do you know any thing about the defendant's whipping the deceased before he ran away?"

"Who's defendant,—and what's deceased?" asked the colonel, an idea passing through his mind that the district

attorney was quizzing him, because he was not a "college educated" man.

"I mean," said the district attorney, "did Mr. Toadvine ever whip Jack to your knowledge?"

"Sartain he did," said the colonel, looking very blank; "sartain he did, and by my advice, too."

Major Trimmer was again upon his feet, and with a loud voice he appealed to the Court to know, if witnesses were obliged to answer questions relating to their private business, particularly gentlemen overseers, regarding their punishment of negroes.

Price thought that Trimmer asked him the question, and he vehemently replied:

"I rather think I ain't obliged to answer any questions that I don't want to, and you may depend on *that*."

"The Court" seemed very much delighted with its temporary mouth-piece.

"How much was Jack whipped by Mr. Toadvine on your suggestion, Colonel Price?" pursued the district attorney.

"Just as much," replied the colonel, "as Toadvine had grease in his back to work his arms with; and since you want to know so many particulars," said the colonel, turning to the district attorney, "I would just say, that if any man gets out a 'dictment agin me for killing a nigger, I'll cut his ——"

"Silence!" said the sheriff;—"Take him out!" cried the lawyers; "Go it, old colonel!" vociferated the "outsiders."

The judge finally leaned over, and said to the deputy

sheriff, "Take 'the colonel' out of the court, or I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of committing him for contempt."

"Oh, come out of the court—I want to tell you something," whispered the officious deputy.

Price gazed upon the speaker vacantly, for he was very much intoxicated, and walked quietly through the crowd into the street. Quiet being restored, it was announced that "the defence was closed."

Meanwhile, Gen. Bledsoe and the particular friends who came with him to Beechland in the morning, formed a group by themselves, and seemed in angry conference. Expressions of contempt for the whole proceedings of the trial were to be heard, reminding one of the mutterings of a coming storm; the judge was denounced as one of "Busteed's right-hand men,"—the jury, as "a set of packed rascals,"—the district attorney, as "an ass,"—and Trimmer, "as a parasite upon the community in which he lived."

Mildmay, who had left home at the cost of neglecting important business that required his personal attention; and feeling sorely disgusted at all he had witnessed, called Gen. Bledsoe apart, stated the facts, and announced his intention of returning home at once.

"I would go by all means," said Gen. Bledsoe, without hesitation, "if my presence were needed elsewhere. You now see, Mr. Mildmay," exclaimed the general, with some feeling, "that that scoundrel, Toadvine, will cheat the gallows after all; you will learn, when you have lived here a few more years, that we are obliged sometimes to

take the law into our own hands, if we would not have it violated with impunity."

"It is a fearful alternative," sighed Mildmay; and cordially shaking Gen. Bledsoe by the hand, he musingly pursued his way to Heritage Place.

Some little excitement existed among the spectators preceding the "opening of the prosecution." After a few general remarks, the district attorney, who was quite a young man, said:—

"The defendant stands charged with murder. In accordance with just mercy, the laws of Louisiana make no invidious distinctions against the negro, when we come to the protection of his life; and the white man, who with malice aforethought, wilfully kills the humblest slave, has committed in the eye of the law the highest crime known to our statutes.

"In all cases of death by violence, the law presumes it to be done in malice until the contrary be proved: this is so construed for the protection of life. If, therefore, you are satisfied that the killing was done with malice, and find no extenuating circumstances, you cannot do less than what the law demands of you.

"In the operation of our police regulations, a negro is committed to jail; in due course of time, the overseer calls at the place of the slave's confinement,—obtains possession of him,—ties one end of a rope around the slave's neck, and the other to the pommel of his saddle,—and before a half mile is accomplished, the negro becomes exhausted, is dragged through the mud for more than a hun-

dred yards, and is then cut loose, and left in the road, being perfectly dead.

"The peculiar character of our institutions requires that the master should necessarily delegate a great deal of power to his confidential agent—the overseer; but that authority is to be exerted wisely, and, except in extreme cases, violence is not to be used. I am sorry to say, gentlemen, that the abuse of power by overseers is becoming too common; it is a source of alarm to the thinking people of the community, that there is exhibited a growing wantonness in the sacrifice of this species of property, and the consequent shedding of human blood. Unless, gentlemen, we protect our slaves,—unless the strong arm of the law is exerted to shield them from the death-dealing influences of irresponsible white men, society among us will rapidly degenerate into barbarism, and there will settle down upon us a cloud deeper and more terrible than that which once overwhelmed Egypt.

"You have, also, gentlemen, a duty to perform, which should be one to you of serious consideration. There are fanatics at the North, who make it their unrighteous business to vilify and misrepresent the South. It is such cases, as we have here to-day presented, that give foundation to the misrepresentations we have alluded to; and we are bound, as we wish to have our community protected by the powerful support of the sanction of good men of every land, to punish those who would give force to the odium that is heaped upon us. We must let no more feathers, plucked from the breast of our own body politic,

give certainty of aim to these shafts of abuse, and then will they fall harmless to the ground.

"The most responsible,—the most honorable men of our community, have given in their testimony to-day. It has been shown by Mr. Orcutt, that the accused tied the deceased with a rope around the neck previous to the leaving of the jail; it has been proven that the prisoner was seen leaving the town at dusk,—the negro following close in the rear. It has been shown by the testimony of such gentlemen as General Bledsoe, and others of equal moral veracity, that the deceased was found in the road, his neck broken, and with all the corresponding marks of a fearful murder.

"Mr. Mildmay, the owner of the deceased, states distinctly, that the victim of brutality was unexceptionable in character; and although a family servant, grown up under his own eye, yet no recollection was had that the deceased was ever struck a blow for insubordination, or any other cause of disobedience whatever. In view of all these facts, gentlemen, it is for you to vindicate the sincerity of our laws, passed for the protection of the slave, and show those who are willing to trample them under foot, that it cannot be done with impunity. Spurn not the cries of blood that come from the ground, because that blood flowed from the heart of a poor African slave. Remember that the eye of Heaven is no respecter of persons; feel the full force of the demand made upon you, from the very fact, that the murdered victim was helpless,—was unsupported,—had no family influence,—no position; that he was a helpless, unoffending negro slave, with no inherit-

ance, but a desire to render cheerful obedience to his superiors; with no one to avenge his wrongs, but the decision of a conscientious and enlightened jury."

There was no applause expressed at the conclusion of the district attorney's speech, for, as Puckett said to Busteed, "there was nothing in it to make a man yelp." The moment, however, that it was announced that Major Trimmer was "to begin the defence," there was great excitement among the spectators. The bar-room of the "Head-quarters" was vacated in a moment by quite a number of individuals who had found the "prosecution tedious," but who were very anxious to hear the "scathing eloquence" of "the most distinguished criminal lawyer in the district."

It was perfectly understood that the major would "exalt himself" on this particular occasion. He was always a candidate for political honors, and, as in law practice, was always on either one side or another, and as an election was near at hand, he had expressed to an intimate friend the opinion, that he thought he might take advantage of his defence of Toadvine to say something so handsome of the overseers as a body, that he could secure their influence at the polls.

The major began by saying, "that he felt deeply the fearful responsibility resting upon him, but that he was afraid that his astonishment at the fact of his client being tried at all for killing the negro Jack, would overcome his ability to do justice to the mighty wrongs his client had suffered, in this unjust and absurd prosecution." When the major concluded this opening sentence, Toad-

vine looked, for the first time since the trial began, at the jury.

The major proceeded :—" If I were left to consult my own feelings, I should submit my injured client's cause without argument to your keeping; but, honored gentlemen, I should be doing injustice to society, to good morals, and to the rights of an American sovereign, if I did not here before this honorable court, before these enlightened arbiters, and before this chivalrous audience, express my opinion; and in my official capacity as a member of this bar, enter my protest against the unnecessary and extraordinary legal proceedings which have been made to sacrifice the liberty and happiness of one of our most useful, and, poor man though he be, I will add, one of our most influential citizens.

" Gentlemen of the jury, who is my client? I answer, a person I have long known, and been intimate with; an individual, who forms one of the bright galaxy of overseers—those noble men, who control our servile population,—who brave the heats of a tropical sun in the performance of their arduous duties,—who sleep at night beside their arms, to be ready to defend whom—themselves? No, gentlemen of the jury, to defend their employers—the lordly planters—from insubordination and insurrection; a class of men, who risk their life daily, and take a sum of money as remuneration, which would be as nothing, if they were not inspired by patriotism,—were not philanthropists by trade; of such, gentlemen, is Sylvanus Toadvine, who now sits before you. And this is the man possessed of so many admirable qualities, who has

been by the most unwarrantable legal proceedings incarcerated in a common jail, and left to linger out a miserable existence, for what?—for what, I say, gentlemen? Simply, because a dead negro was found in the same road, that my respected client passed over on his way to Mr. Mildmay's plantation.

"My legal brother, the district attorney, has stated, that it was proven beyond a doubt, that a negro had been killed. Where is the authority for such a presumption? It has been shown past contradiction that a negro was dead, which negro, as I shall show, probably died of a fatal disorder, from what is termed a natural cause; and no personal violence had any thing to do with the case.

"Now what are the facts? Simply these. The defendant is overseer on a large plantation; he has the control of sixty or eighty brutalized Africans, who require his constant attention; he has contracted with their master to cultivate a certain amount of land, and produce a fixed number of bales of cotton. To do this, and escape losing the reputation of a business man, the overseer labors night and day, and is properly intrusted with the sole control and management of the slave gang.

"The overseer knows well the disposition of the negro, and while the master is treading, with dainty steps, his marble halls, the faithful overseer is winding his devious way through interminable swamps; while the master is lounging upon the delicate ethereal spring-made ottoman, the overseer makes his couch upon the hard, cold ground; while the master is indulging in the delights of the table groaning beneath the luxuries of every clime, the overseer

is frugally eating his meal of bacon and greens; while the master sees his negroes fat, sleek, happy, and idle, the overseer beholds them as the necessary objects of strict discipline, and is forced to make them do their work.

"Therefore, gentlemen of the jury, when the owner of a negro comes into court, and under oath declares that negro to have been without a fault,—to have been well-behaved and harmless, that owner acts conscientiously, believes what he says, speaks what he thinks is true; but the overseer, gentlemen, can alone know the facts,—one word from Col. Price, a disinterested and capable witness, as to the outrageous insubordination of the deceased, is worth whole volumes of presumption from the good-natured, and where the affections are concerned, easily deceived master. Having satisfied you, gentlemen (as a mere incident), of the savage and barbarous character of this negro, Jack, for it is not necessary for me, in any way to strengthen the defence, to dwell upon the subject, I will examine the testimony adduced for the attempted proof, that he died by the hands of my injured client.

"It is stated by Mr. Orcutt, that Mr. Toadvine left the jail with Jack; and two respectable witnesses swear that they saw a man, on the evening of 'the murder,' going out of Beechland, *a* negro following at his horse's heels, with a rope tied round his neck.

"Well, gentlemen of the jury, I have had *some* practice in criminal cases, but I never have had so weak a one before to defend. Mr. Orcutt says that the boy was tied—of course he was tied,—was Mr. Toadvine to risk his life in the hands of a desperate and dangerous runaway, armed

with a 'bowie;' an outlaw, burning with revenge because he had been properly punished,—was he to risk himself alone in the dark forests that lie between Beechland and Heritage Place, with such a negro, except that negro were bound—with manacles and chains, we should say? But my client, from his urbane disposition, kindness of heart, and unusual bravery, was content with a single cord.

"But two witnesses swear they saw a man going out of town, with a negro at his horse's heels, and a rope around his neck. Gentlemen, I do not wish to impugn the motives of these witnesses, but I leave it to your imagination to comprehend, how distinctly they could see a rope in the dusk of the evening, and also to decide, if, because a man went out of Beechland, as these witnesses testify, it must necessarily have been my client, or the insubordinate and dangerous Jack.

"The district attorney has dwelt at length on the fact, that the law announces the punishment of murder for killing a negro; he therefore argues that if the crime be proved, the law should be executed. Let me say, gentlemen, that these laws, so inconsistent with our feelings and our institutions, are borrowed from the common law of England; they were made for serfs, not independent, enlightened Southern men; and although they are legally living on our statute books, they are virtually dead; repealed by the superiority of our enlightened public opinion, by custom, and by necessity.

"Suppose, for a moment, that my client did kill Jack, is the law such an absurdity; is the perfection of human

reason such nonsense, that it can, in one breath, make the same thing a chattel, a table, a wash-tub; and in the next respiration, declare it to be a feeling, reasoning, sensible being? If my supposition were true, and if the law were consistent, it would be your duty, gentlemen, to bring in a verdict of damages. Property alone has been destroyed—let reparation be made. This construction would be in accordance with equity, and in accordance with the spirit of our peculiar institutions. To forfeit the life of a white man, a sovereign citizen, for a miserable piece of property that is bought and sold, put up at auction, bartered away, has no rights, is by law real estate—is the sublime of absurdity, and makes men of sense pronounce a trial like this to be indeed a farce.

"It is not true, gentlemen, that a law is a law, because it is upon the statute book. The same law that in England is construed to mean murder in the first degree, when brought before our enlightened courts, and our independent juries, is translated to be 'justifiable homicide.' In this country public opinion controls and governs the conduct of all men, and we are forced to act in obedience to its potential voice, whatever law to the contrary may exist. You will pardon me, gentlemen of the jury, for this digression, and coming back to the trial under consideration, I shall endeavor to treat it with all due solemnity, and at least to go through the forms of a defence, however unnecessary it may be.

"My client did tie a rope around the boy Jack, and why? Because he was afraid, unless he had him in the most complete manner in his power, he would slay him before

he, Toadvine, reached his home. Can you not imagine, gentlemen, a thousand ways in which the negro could have been killed, while in this condition, by his own self-will, his own insubordination? Would it be an unnatural thing in negro history, to suppose that this 'amiable Jack' designedly held back, determined to die rather than return to the plantation? Can you not imagine Mr. Toadvine's horse, which was young and fractious, suddenly taking alarm, and dragging the negro to the earth, when it was entirely beyond my client's power to anticipate such an accident, or control it when it occurred? But, gentlemen, this was not all,—death is not such a rare occurrence among negroes, that when one dies he must necessarily have been murdered. Mr. Orcutt clearly testifies that there was cholera among the prisoners, and could not Jack, with his bowie knife, have cut himself loose from the rope he was tied with, and by sudden exposure to the night air, after his previous comfortable lodgment in the jail, died upon the road from the effects of this prostrating disease?

"But, gentlemen, I perceive that I am wasting your precious time by my unnecessary remarks, yet I must, before I close, allude to *one* extraordinary appeal, made to you by the district attorney. Not content to take every advantage of the technicalities of the law, to prejudice you against the prisoner, he has threatened you with the indignation of 'the fanatics of the North,' as a penalty for letting the innocent go free. I am shocked at such a sentiment, uttered by a Southern lawyer to a chivalrous Southern jury. What care we for the 'favorable opinion of the

good people of the North,' as my legal brother, in a moment of unguarded reflection, has called the 'abolition fanatics of the free States?' If they demand punishment upon my client, then you have a just cause for letting him go free; if he had killed a hundred negroes, our liberties, our religion, our all are in danger, the moment we make the least concession to the enemies of our cherished institutions.

"Gentlemen, I leave my client in your hands; you have the noble, the exalted, the majestic right, to unloose the hold of justice upon him; you can open his prison doors, and bid him go free. Restore him, gentlemen, to his exalted position in society as a citizen. Remember, that the blind goddess of Justice is looking down upon you, anxiously waiting to see you vindicate her purity,—that the Angel of Liberty has her pen in hand, ready to inscribe upon the stars and stripes, that Toadvine and our country are free,—that the American eagle is standing upon the apex of the Rocky Mountains, with outstretched wings, one eye bent upon this interesting scene, and the other, unblenched, staring at the noonday sun, ready in his exalted flight to scream, 'Give me liberty, or give me death!'"

Great and continuous cheering by the jury and audience now interrupted the major, who bowed repeatedly to his admirers, and in a satisfied and oracular voice, he concluded:

"Before you retire, gentlemen of the jury, the honored Court will give you the usual charge; you will hear the law expounded, sanctioned by the 'sacred ermine,' so long

sanctified as the outward symbol of the unsullied purity of the law.—[Here the judge smoothed down his Arkansas blanket coat.]—Your verdict I already anticipate; confident of acquittal, I leave my respected client in your disposal."

The moment that the applause called forth by Major Trimmer's eloquence had ceased, the sheriff vociferously called out *order, order;* and then taking a lounging negro by the shoulder, rudely thrust him out of doors, to show his vigilance in the public welfare; this being done, the "ermine" delivered itself as follows:

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the testimony on both sides of this case, and"—here the "ermine" yawned, and then went on: "if you think the prisoner guilty, you will bring in a verdict accordingly; if you think him innocent, you will bring in a verdict accordingly!"—the remainder of the "charge" became so indistinct, that the jurors, presuming that the "ermine" had concluded, headed by the sheriff, left their seats, and in a moment more could be heard, in shuffling sounds, overhead.

The moment the "twelve honest men" were left to themselves, for deliberation, they proceeded at once to elect a "foreman," which being done, a general conversation ensued, about crops, races, hard seats in the jury box, and Major Trimmer's speech. It was generally agreed that it was one of his tamest efforts, and this was accounted for by the fact, "that the trial being only about a nigger, didn't call forth his best style." A "piney woods' man" remarked, that he had shot a great many eagles, but he didn't see how one of them could look down and

upward at the same time, but he s'posed Major Trimmer's bird "was cross-eyed."

Buatt, who had been exceedingly restless throughout the whole trial, and had not hesitated to express it in every allowable way, now that he was in the jury-room, where he could speak, deliberately took off his overcoat, and folding it up for a pillow, stretched himself out upon a bench, remarking, "You know my sentiments,—I'm for hanging the jury, I don't care how your verdict is!" and in a few moments he fell into a profound slumber.

The foreman said there was no use of going down stairs immediately, that it would look better *to appear* to deliberate awhile, at least; and he started a very animated conversation about the coming election, in which the different members of the jury entered warmly, and freely expressed their opinions of the "prominent candidates."

The sun had gone down, and as most of the jurors had become thirsty, it was decided to take down the verdict of "not guilty," which was agreed upon, without any formal consultation; but there was the stubborn Buatt, ready to differ with his eleven compeers, no matter how they decided, and who, if not managed, might keep them prisoners, at the mercy of the judge.

The foreman finally struck upon a bright idea; he told all to say they were for "guilty," and then waking up Buatt, that worthy was informed that the jury had "agreed." "How?" asked Buatt, still half asleep. "Guilty!" was the universal exclamation. "Well, I'm 'not guilty,'" said Buatt, turning over to take another nap. The foreman then said, "Here, Buatt, put down

your name to 'not guilty,' and let's go down and tell the judge we are hung." Buatt readily consented, and signed his name to the verdict as requested, whereupon the foreman suddenly exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, thar's no use a-staying here all night,—let's go over to Buatt's side, and get done with the business." The proposition was instantly agreed to, and a general laugh ensued at Buatt's expense. At first, he was quite indignant, but soon became reconciled; and as the jury was going to report to the "ermine," he said, "If you hadn't played that trick on me, I intended to keep you tied up for three days; there's the bread and cheese I had to do it on," and he pointed to a large package that protruded from his coat pocket.

The moment the jury retired, Gen. Bledsoe was seen moving about on the outside of the court-house. He had private consultations with different persons; and as the sun disappeared, a number of armed men might have been seen stationed at different points,—all appearing intent on some special object. Two were side by side, and as they examined their double-barrel fowling-pieces, one remarked, "There cannot be a doubt but that the jury will bring in a verdict of not guilty, but we will teach *him* that there's law outside the court-house, if there is none in it."

The increasing darkness had settled upon the court-room,—the two or three candles that were burning only gave a sepulchral effect to the many spectators, who in silent groups remained to see the end, for it was rumored that Toadvine was "to be lynched," if let off by the jury. The prisoner maintained his place beside his counsel,

still wearing that marked blanket coat; and he occasionally looked out of doors with nervous apprehension. It was evidently from that quarter that he apprehended danger.

Presently there was a movement of the jury overhead, and its members could be heard descending the stairs, which gave the usual signal that the jury had agreed upon a verdict. Every body commenced crowding round the judge's stand, and universal confusion prevailed. The jury appeared, and after the usual preliminaries, each member answered "not guilty," as his name was called by the clerk. This done, "the ermine" complimented the jury on its attention, and the high-toned manner with which it had conducted itself,—announced it "discharged;" and declared the prisoner free. Amid a great deal of confusion, a shout went up from the crowd; Gen. Bledsoe heard the offensive noise,—knew what it meant, and gnashed his teeth in anger "Now," said he, to some persons near him, "let us vindicate the outraged laws."

Every one now moved but the late prisoner; there he sat, from his dress the most conspicuous person in the court-house, as if overcome with emotion; he stirred not, but burying his face, remained statue-like and still. Soon the self-constituted arbiters of the law, who were hovering outside in the darkness, became impatient for their prey, and some, unable longer to restrain their fury, amidst terrible oaths and imprecations, rushed into the court-room, to seize him where he sat, when, lo and behold! instead of the sinister face of Toadvine, there was revealed the honester one of Puckett!

In the confusion of the giving in of the verdict, Toadvine, who had throughout acted under Major Trimmer's instructions, had shed his coat, slipped unperceived through the cordon of his enemies, and at that very moment, was swiftly speeding down the rapid current of the Mississippi.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AMERICAN WEAKNESS.

THE resignation of a member "elect" of the Legislature, caused an unexpected election to be held to supply the vacancy. Col. Lee, being a Virginian, and coming, as he often remarked, from the only State in the Union that made "politics a business," of course took a deep interest in "public affairs;" and as he could not get from the people a nomination for himself, he determined, as a compliment to his friend Mr. Moreton to obtain for that gentleman the distinguished honor.

Mr. Moreton was highly respected, but was not in the popular sense a "favorite with the masses." He was eccentric in his humors, and, from long habit, accustomed to indulge in any caprice of feeling uppermost in his mind, consequently, he had the reputation of being very proud; and his occasionally amiable, and probably his natural manner, was regarded with suspicion by those who had become prejudiced by his frequent displays of insensibility and hauteur. But Mr. Moreton was wealthy, and Lee had a Virginian theory, that every thing could be

carried at the polls by a judicious use of money; and after some difficulty succeeded, to the surprise of every body but those in the secret, to have Mr. Moreton declared the choice of "the party!"

It required all Col. Lee's eloquence to induce Mr. Moreton to become a candidate; but his pride and his ambition were wrought upon, and with the understanding that Mr. Moreton's friends were to do all the electioneering, the selected candidate was declared "duly in the field." On the Saturday succeeding these events, Mr. Moreton's name appeared in large type in the columns of the *Southern Clarion*, with a highly laudatory editorial notice.

The election was to be what was called a "short brush," and the "Moreton party" entered at once upon their arduous duties. Busteed, and his hangers-on, immediately rose into popularity. Loafers, who had not been known to have a cent for months, were in the streets spending money, and "working" for Moreton; and one or two "awful republicans," who had made it their business for years to denounce Moreton "as a stuck-up aristocrat, who hated poor men, and tried to run over them, because he owned a hundred niggers," suddenly became convinced that they were mistaken; and they felt it a matter of simple justice, and in "honor bound," to give Mr. Moreton their cordial support.

Now the "representative district" had an extraordinary geographical peculiarity. It was a long narrow belt of land, bounded in front by the Mississippi,—in the rear, by a "dry river." The lands fronting upon the "Father

of waters" were rich and fertile beyond comparison, and were taken up by large plantations, and possessed of course but few white inhabitants, the population being mostly negroes. The lands shelving toward "dry river" were 'piny woods," and densely occupied by poor white men, who, owning but few servants, were obliged to work themselves.

The "opposition," therefore, conceived the idea, that as the defeat of Mr. Morcton under the circumstances was almost hopeless, (there not being time to bring the proper influences to bear,) the best thing that could be done was to bring out a "Green River candidate;" set him going with the cry of "the poor man's friend," and the "piny woods pony," and let him "rip," as some of the boys said, who liked the fun of the contest, without caring for the result.

To carry out this design, a man living in "Possum Hollow," by the name of Duffy White, who was the father of a large family, miserably poor and ignorant, but self-conceited, and who from the habit of using large words without knowing the meaning of them, was considered a great man in his region of country,—was declared an "independent candidate," who would run without regard to cliques, "chickenry," or mercenary influences. This decided upon, Duffy White's name was sent to the *Southern Clarion* for publication, which caused the editor much embarrassment.

The difficulty lay in this: if the editor of the local paper had any sentiment whatever, it was to hate rich men; and although he was constantly lending him-

self to elevate them, and sustain their sway in the community, still it was a heartless support, and bought for a price. Lee had delicately sent to him a note, inclosing a fifty dollar bill, in which he stated, that he did not expect him (the editor) to occupy his columns in support of candidates for political honors, and give his labor without just remuneration.

On the other hand, Duffy White had his sympathy simply because he was Duffy White, and also because a leading member elect of the Legislature, and a friend of the candidate for the United States Senate, had of course sent the editor a letter, in which he spoke in very complimentary terms of the *Southern Clarion*, and suggested that it might get the State printing, if Duffy White could be elected: Mr. Moreton was known to be friendly to a journal printed in another part of the State. The editor of the *Clarion* finally pursued his usual course when deeply puzzled; he went over to the "Head-quarters," and took several successive "drinks," and after getting his ideas sufficiently conglomerated to write himself out of the difficulty, he dashed off the following notice, and placed it in his most valuable columns.

"In our last issue, we noticed the 'regular nomination' of Peyton Moreton, Esq., as candidate for the vacant seat in the Legislature. At that time we were not aware that Mr. Moreton would have an opposing candidate. It will be seen, by reference to the proper column, that Capt. Duffy White has consented to allow his name to be used; and we understand that he has many warm friends and admirers. As an independent journalist, it is best,

perhaps, that we take no part in this contest; both gentlemen are personally known and honored in our midst; and either, if elected, will serve his constituents with credit, and worthily represent the State." This editorial was read and laughed at; Mr. Moreton never dreamed of any serious opposition, and in anticipation of his election, took to studying with the greatest avidity "Jefferson's Manual," and arranging his ideas on the subject of the "New Constitution."

A few days only, however, had passed away before the scales began to fall from their eyes. A United States Senator was to be elected, and the candidate for that office knew that he could receive no support from Mr. Moreton, for they not only differed in politics, but were not personally friendly; but having plenty of money, and determined, if possible, to be elected, he sent the "right kind of a man from the State Capitol" over to "Possum Hollow" to see Duffy White, to furnish him with the "sinews of war,"—get his tickets printed,—supply his electors with whiskey, and slang terms; and before Col. Lee was aware of it, Duffy White's party came out "of the woods," like an army "terrible with banners."

A clap of thunder at noonday could not have been more unexpected to the people of Beechland. The excitement was immense. Some of the "independent voters," whom Lee had apparently secured to himself by a shake of the hand, or the loan of a few dollars, began to stagger in their fealty, and the "sturdy republicans," who had been so suddenly convinced that Mr. Moreton was not so proud a man as they thought him, went over to Duffy White's

side, body and soul; acknowledging privately, that they had been for the moment influenced by improper motives.

The shock to Mr. Moreton was overwhelming. He had, against his wishes, been induced to run,—never dreaming of opposition; or, if defeated, presumed that it would be by some opponent worthy of his steel, and the possibility of Duffy White's being preferred to him by his fellow-citizens as a representative, stung him to the quick; roused all his energy and all his bitterness; and by the advice of Lee, he got out an old carriage, with a couple of plough-horses attached, and putting on home-spun clothes, and his overseer's hat, he started out seriously to electioneer,—giving his confidential lieutenants to understand, that any reasonable, or unreasonable, amount of money was at their command to keep him from being disgraced. The season of the year was fine; the people had their "crops laid by," and the unexpected excitement of the election was a source of gratification to all,—for to people who had little or nothing to do, it gave pleasant employment to body and mind.

Ten days more, and the result would be known. Duffy White, it was evident, had secured the entire sympathy of his neighborhood constituents. Hardly a man in the "piny woods" but felt that he was bound to sustain a candidate, brought out in compliment to "the toiling millions;" in fact, it seemed as if there had seized upon the community a sort of fascination, and Duffy White—who made a mark to represent his name—who was even ignorant of the proper use of the simplest words of his native

tongue, was likely to be elected to the responsible office of maker and conservator of the laws.

So indefatigable had been the canvassers on both sides, that the friends of the two candidates had procured the names of voters in the sparse population of the county, and it could be told with almost unerring certainty how would stand the ballot. The consequence was, that Mr. Moreton's friends discovered that a few votes might decide the result; and then rose into sudden notice a "genteel gambler," by the name of Hickman, who could by his influence on certain of Busteed's customers, control some eight or ten of the "independent constituency." No sooner had Col. Lee informed himself of the fact, than he immediately saw that it was necessary to secure Hickman to Mr. Moreton's interest; and he accordingly set about the task.

Meanwhile, Mr. Moreton, who was of the most excitable temperament, was wrought up to the highest pitch of disquietude. He wanted the thing decided, and to be out of his agony. Duffy White bestrode him night and day. He became disgusted with the concessions of opinion he had to make to people he despised,—of affected sympathy for people he fairly hated,—yet he was kept in this terrible slavery, because it was necessary for him to defeat Duffy White.

"D—n Duffy White!" he would roar out, when by himself in the woods; "d—n Duffy White!" he would exclaim in the sacred precincts of his own fireside.

Mrs. Moreton never interfered with her husband's plans, except to give them her cordial indorsement; but

she became absolutely alarmed at Mr. Moreton's intense feeling, and for the first time in the many years of her married life,—made a suggestion.

She urged Mr. Moreton to treat this horrid Duffy White as he deserved—"treat him," said she, "with sovereign contempt; and, by resigning, put it out of the power of vulgar people to affect your happiness, or for one moment destroy your peace." But Mr. Moreton had become infected with the idea of office,—to be a member of the Legislature,—a position he had always ridiculed and scoffed at, suddenly became important for his welfare, and writhing, as he was, in the mud and mire of political chicanery, he allowed himself to be hurried on.

Hickman was a sensitive person, and loved popularity; and finding himself cut off by his "professional pursuits" from such society as he most admired, he took pleasure in courting the good will of that class of idlers who hang about bar-rooms, in every decaying town; and as he seemingly gave much, and demanded little in return, he thus found himself unexpectedly honored with the disposition of a certain number of his admirers' votes. It had always been Hickman's darling ambition to become acquainted with Col. Lee; and when that gentleman, after passing him by in silent contempt for years, met him, and shook him by the hand, and expressed a great interest in his welfare and happiness, Hickman was shrewd enough to understand the cause of his sudden popularity, and at once determined to make the best possible use of it for his own advantage.

Mildmay, without ever having spoken to Hickman, had

in some way mortally offended him; and as he, Hickman, possessed a mean spirit, and wanted to win the reputation of a "fighting man," he came to the singular determination that it would be a source of great glory to challenge Mildmay, and thus, without running any danger, receive the consideration so universally (as he supposed) bestowed upon a professed duellist.

Hickman had often overheard Col. Lee speak in no respectful terms of what he called Mr. Mildmay's courage; it had become a kind of prevalent idea that Mildmay was principled against duelling. But, since the trial, Mildmay's strict attention to business,—his love of books, his conscientious discharge of every duty as a citizen,—his interference on one or two occasions as a peacemaker between parties who had difficulties,—his intense desire to leave Toadvine to be punished by the written law, rather than by violence,—his condemnation, by example, of intemperance,—all these things had gradually caused him to be looked upon as one "destitute of spirit," as "lacking chivalry;" and he became in popular estimation a rich but utterly ruined man, from the force of an unfortunate "Northern education."

With the determination on the part of Hickman to make the most out of his sudden acquaintance with Mr. Morcton, he met Col. Lee's advances with coldness; and it was not until he had been out to Mr. Morcton's house, that he allowed himself to be formally approached with regard to the coming political struggle. After a sumptuous dinner, and the use of much wine, the subject of the election was flatly broached, and the proud and digni-

fied Mr. Moreton, in the excitement of the moment, condescended to ask Hickman for his support.

But Hickman had determined to have his pound of flesh. It was a pleasure to him to see those begging and suing for his influence who had so long and so lately passed him unheeded by; and after enjoying this triumph to his heart's content, he coldly told Mr. Moreton of his feelings toward Mildmay,—dwelt upon the supposed insults he had received from that young man,—and demanded, as the only price that could be paid for his votes, that Mr. Moreton would the next day take from him, Hickman, a challenge to the owner of Heritage Place.

Although of late there had sprung up between Mr. Moreton and Mildmay, some coolness, yet had Hickman proposed to Mr. Moreton such a thing, as being his second on the day before his nomination for office, Mr. Moreton would probably have chastised Hickman on the spot, but on the present occasion, his astonishment at the impertinence of Hickman, and his fear for the moment to offend him, kept him silent; and for the first time in his life, he felt humbled in his own imperial heart.

Hickman bore the suspense of Mr. Moreton's indecision with the same blank look that he would have assumed, had he staked his all on the turning of a card, and in this his professional pursuits had given him a manner that was now of service.

"I'll think of this!" said Mr. Moreton, finally moving away. "I'll think of this!" he repeated, and turning to Hickman, he continued: "Col. Lee will give you my answer in the morning."

"Master!" said the servant, presenting herself with a silver salver, containing some minute but fragrant cups of coffee and Havana cigars—"Master, the gentleman has gone without his coffee."

Mr. Moreton was pacing hurriedly up and down the gallery; he was very fond of coffee, and for the first time in years, when in health, he waved it away, and continued his agitated strides. Lee, however, helped himself, and after slowly drinking the delicious beverage, he took up a cigar, and telling the girl to bring him a light, sat composedly down. In a few moments the smoke was curling around his head. Meanwhile Mr. Moreton passed and repassed before him, resembling, in his agitation, and in the mechanical certainty of his steps, a lion exercising in his cage.

"Lee!" said Mr. Moreton, finally—"Lee! by heaven, sir, this is insufferable! I'm badgered by that scoundrel, Duffy White, and bearded in my own den, by a miserable blackleg, that should be hung up to the first tree."

"It's bad, Moreton!" returned Lee, in an affected voice; "but it's nothing after all. Take the challenge," he continued; "Hickman is an arrant coward, and Mildmay is too psalm-singing, and too much of a gentleman to accept it; we'll keep the thing on the tapis until after the election, get Hickman's votes, and then let him go to the d——l, or what is just the same, make him and Mildmay shake hands, and say no more about the matter."

"If I thought," replied Mr. Moreton, checking his strides, "if I thought I should in any way, by this matter, compromise myself; if I thought Mildmay would look upon

my conduct as I do, I'd stop here, and vote for Duffy White myself, before I would secure my seat by such means."

"But Mildmay won't think about it as you do!" said Col. Lee. "He will receive the challenge, ask to have an explanation made to Hickman (for Mildmay has never intentionally offended him), and you will make Mildmay feel obliged for acting in the matter, and if Hickman ever says any thing offensive, I will, myself, chastise his impertinence."

"I'll have nothing to do with it," said Mr. Moreton, after a long hesitation—"nothing to do with it. I am ashamed," he continued, "that I consented to run for an office which cannot be obtained without so many sacrifices. I abandon the contest, and leave the arena of politics until gentlemen can appear upon it, and be respected."

Col. Lee knew the disposition of Mr. Moreton too well to argue with him after he had come to a determination; he therefore rose to depart, when, just at the moment, there appeared at the gate the well-known Col. Price. The overseer was a "piney woods man," and was much relied upon by Mr. Moreton, for his influence with that class of people; the consequence was, that ever since the contest began, the overseer, on the pretence of attending to political interests, had neglected the more important ones of the plantation; and he had just returned from Beechland, with the latest news.

Out of breath, a little intoxicated, and much excited; he gave a history of his tour among the people on Green River, and related many anecdotes illustrative of the "un-

fair means" used to prejudice the people against Mr. Moreton. He related, among other things, that there had been "an extra" printed and circulated, that represented Mr. Moreton as a man that wouldn't let his overseers, or any other poor men, come into his presence, unless they held their hats in their hands, and behaved like niggers; that he would not allow said poor men, particularly "if they were from the piney woods," to sit down at his table, but rudely drove them away from his house, or if particularly kind, would send them to the negro quarters, to get something to eat! It was furthermore asserted, that he had started on an electioneering tour, with a suit of clothes on he had borrowed from his overseer; that he had a silver cup and "old brandy," to treat the "aristocracy" with, and a gourd and "sixteen cent whiskey," for the common people; and finally and lastly, that Mr. Moreton's body servant, who accompanied him in his travels round the parish, was present, merely to do the shaking hands with the poor folks, he, Mr. Moreton, being afraid to do it himself, lest he would get the itch, or some other contamination.

In conclusion, Col. Price (who had really gone out frolicking around, without regard to Mr. Moreton's interests), pretended, or did believe, that if Mr. Moreton could secure a certain named number of votes at the Beechland precinct, his election was certain; in fact, Duffy White acknowledged to him (Col. Price), that such was the case.

The political thermometer in Mr. Moreton's breast, now rose again; with Lee he looked over the prepared list of votes, and Hickman's ten ballots placed the election beyond a doubt.

Hickman gained,—triumph was sure. Moreton hesitated, argued, took a favorable view of the challenge, began to think it was nothing serious after all, a mere whim of Hickman's,—that Mildmay would forget it in a few days—that any thing unpleasant could be reconciled at the dinner which Mr. Moreton proposed to give, to celebrate his election; and the end was, that Lee left for Beechland, with the understanding that he would prepare a respectful challenge for Hickman, get that gentleman's name signed to it, bring it out the next day to Mr. Moreton, who would deliver it to Mildmay, and leave it take its course.

Mildmay was so busy attending to his planting interests, that he had only heard by accident, that there was to be an election, and that Mr. Moreton was the candidate. It was his intention therefore, at a stated time, to ride over with Annie to Mr. Moreton's house, and talk with him on the subject; he was, therefore, not surprised the next day, when he saw Mr. Moreton coming toward Heritage Place, and supposing the gentleman was upon the business of the canvass, Mildmay met him at the gate, and warmly welcomed him into the house.

The more Mildmay talked, the more moody became Mr. Moreton; the interview soon settled down chilly and ceremonious; at length Mr. Moreton, with evident embarrassment, put his hand in his breast, and taking out a neatly enveloped note, handed it to Mr. Mildmay.

Graham broke the seal, and read the contents with evident surprise. Supposing that his eyes deceived him, he went to the window, and re-read the note, and having assured himself of the contents, he looked at Mr. Moreton,

as if to assure himself that that gentleman was the bearer of such a message; having confirmed himself in all these particulars, he folded up the note, quietly placed it in its envelope, and said:

"Mr. Moreton, I must confess my surprise at receiving a message of this kind, particularly as it is from a man, whom I have no very certain knowledge that I have ever seen. The fact that you have deemed it important enough to bring it, makes it necessary that I should treat it with due reflection; if I return you an answer on next Monday, will it be with your sanction, and so far as the time is concerned, satisfactory?"

Mildmay's voice and manner relieved Mr. Moreton, for every moment he was losing his self-control, and sinking in his own estimation, for consenting to bear the message at all. He therefore eagerly caught at the future time mentioned for the receipt of the answer, and remarked:

"That will be soon enough, Mr. Mildmay, and perhaps the best time, as I am this week exceedingly busy with unexpected labor."

"You shall hear from me then," said Mildmay quietly, for he determined, from the moment that he comprehended the nature of the note, not to speak an unnecessary word. In a few moments more, Mr. Moreton, after declining any refreshment, mounted his horse, and rode away.

Mildmay, after due reflection upon the challenge, decided that he would not alarm Annie by mentioning the subject to her; and that he would write an informal note to Mr. Moreton, refusing to accept the challenge, or have any thing to do with Mr. Hickman, whose character

and position he had become accidentally acquainted with, through some casual remarks of his neighbor, Mr. Speers.

He therefore prepared his answer, determined to take advantage of the first opportunity to send it, by a suitable person, to Mr. Moreton; and thus the matter rested.

The day of the election was also the day for sending the reply, and on the morning of that important event, Mildmay noticed Mr. Moreton's eldest son approaching his house, and on inquiry, found that the lad was going some distance, to attend a "precinct," a few miles off, where he would remain all day, and bring home the returns of the "poll" to his father, in the evening. Mildmay congratulated himself upon having such an excellent person to take his rather delicate epistle, and gave it to young Master Moreton, with the request that he would deliver it as directed, on his return at night,—the lad promised to do so, and continued his journey on the road.

It was agreed by Squire Hobby, Busteed, and the "oldest inhabitant," that there never had been such an excitement at Beechland, as there was at the present occasion. Mr. Moreton's friends exerted themselves to the utmost; they had a large stock of champagne and boned turkey, in an out-of-the-way place, for Col. Lee and *his* friends, and some bad liquor, "barbecued beef," and sea biscuit "for the masses," who were Mr. Moreton's friends. Of this last named "lunch," as there were no other refreshments provided, Duffy White's voters partook with great gusto, some one having told them, that that was "Duffy's treat," while Moreton's constituents met in Col. Lee's "private rooms."

The Beechland precinct was clearly against Duffy White. Hickman's men came in, headed by Puckett, and they created a great deal of amusement, by holding their tickets, inscribed with Mr. Moreton's name, open, and high over their heads. Hickman performed his promise to the letter, and so it was announced to Mr. Moreton, who was in high spirits, and now entirely confident of success.

The fact, however, that Mr. Moreton had condescended to take a challenge from Hickman to Mildmay, was much speculated upon by many quiet, thinking people, who were in their hearts opposed to duelling; and as they had an opportunity of expressing their indignation through the ballot-box, without incurring any responsibility, Mr. Moreton was therefore quietly deprived of about four votes for every one gained by Hickman's influence, that, under other circumstances, would have been his. The consequence was, that when the poll was made up, much to the astonishment of all parties, it was found, "that Mr. Moreton had run ahead of his ticket" every where *but at Beechland.*

It would be impossible to describe the overwhelming confusion that seized upon Mr. Moreton, when he learned his defeat; he stalked up and down his gallery a perfectly wretched man. He did not, or would not, comprehend the real causes of this disaster, but in accordance with his whole life of neglect of self-control, which had comparatively ruined the usefulness of his otherwise splendid mind, he seemed to be desirous of finding some object on which to vent his spleen, amid which he remembered the note he had received from Mildmay by the hand of his

son, but which had heretofore been unread, in the crowding excitements of the hour.

While engaged in reading the first line in the frank and manly epistle of Mildmay, Col. Lee presented himself. He had come out to Mr. Moreton's to console his friend, and explain away the unhappy effects of the election catastrophe. He was received with marked coolness; there was a glimmering in Mr. Moreton's mind that the colonel was the cause of his unpleasant position, and Lee had an idea that such was the case himself. It was, therefore, that that gentleman sat quietly down, depending upon his address, and events as they presented themselves, to make his peace with the "defeated candidate."

Mr. Moreton, without particularly excusing himself, after he saw that Lee was seated, resumed the reading of Mildmay's note. Could Mr. Moreton have received it under other circumstances,—could his naturally sound judgment have operated a moment upon his mind, he would have sent for Mildmay, and in his natural, if expressed, enthusiasm, hugged him to his heart as a friend and younger brother,—so cordial, so frank, so manly, was Mildmay's letter: but such was not to be the case.. After reading the epistle more than once, and after having several times determined to send for Mildmay, and himself make an explanation of his conduct so far as Hickman was concerned,—his pride would revolt at making any concession; he was *afraid* that Col. Lee would not approve of such a course; he remembered how Mildmay had disagreed with him in their last conversation, and without

being conscious of it himself, he had adopted the prevailing idea, that Mildmay "wouldn't fight:" so, amid all these conflicting emotions, he turned to Col. Lee, and said, "Mildmay refuses to meet Hickman."

This remark was a relief to the colonel; he at once comprehended, that by making the proposed duel the subject of conversation, he could lead Mr. Moreton off from an unpleasant subject,—break the force of the first disappointment, and prepare the way to have it consigned to forgetfulness. The colonel therefore said: "I hope, Mr. Moreton, that Mr. Mildmay has not had the effrontery, in refusing to accept Hickman's challenge, to put it upon the ground that Mr. Hickman is not a gentleman?"

"I didn't notice whether he did or no," returned Mr. Moreton, perusing the note again, and then handing it to Col. Lee, who also read it attentively.

Col. Lee, still desirous of leading Mr. Moreton away from thinking of the election, finally said, "I think Mr. Mildmay does insinuate that Mr. Hickman is not a gentleman; at all events, he clearly says that he received the challenge with surprise, considering the source from whence it emanated."

Mr. Moreton's face flushed with conflicting emotions, and walking up and down the gallery a few times, he said, with some excitement, "I hope that I have not fallen so low, that a person for whom I act as a friend, can be treated with contempt."

"I don't think Hickman deserves to be quarrelled about," said Lee, with indifference; "he is good enough for gentlemen to use when necessary, but nothing more."

"At the same time, Lee," said Mr. Moreton, for the first time fully comprehending his position toward Hickman, "if a gentleman agrees to take a challenge, the circumstances become very peculiar, where the second leaves a positive affront on the principal, to go unnoticed."

"That's true," said Col. Lee, in an authoritative tone, the idea suddenly flashing upon him, that if Moreton challenged Mildmay, he would of course have the arrangement of the preliminaries, which were much more elegant and aristocratic than elections; and also remembering that Mildmay "wouldn't fight," he concluded, to play upon Mr. Moreton's high sense of honor, so as to get that gentleman to take Hickman's place; and so well did he succeed, that when he left for Beechland late at night, Mr. Moreton's disappointment at the result of the election was entirely swallowed up by more vindictive feelings; and Lee, in his lonely homeward ride, rehearsed to himself the exciting preliminaries of a "personal meeting," in which he was to be the leading *second*, thereby acquiring for himself additional social and personal glory.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FIELD OF HONOR.

When Col. Lee rode over to Heritage Place with "the note," from Mr. Moreton, Mildmay accidentally met him in the road, near the house; and the colonel internally congratulated himself upon the fact, as he did not care to be embarrassed in his errand, by the appearance of Mrs. Mildmay. After a few general remarks, the colonel presented the missive.

Mildmay, in his letter to Mr. Moreton, had assumed the tone of one who had a right to speak, as to a friend; he clearly expressed the obligations he was under to Mr. Moreton, from the first evening he landed at Heritage Place, up to the moment of his writing. He assumed that as the challenge from Hickman was evidently instigated by malice, that Mr. Moreton would see the person interested, and by a few words, put an end to the matter. Yet he was not altogether, in his own communings, passive under the infliction. With his usual good sense, he made all allowance for Mr. Moreton's presumed education

in favor of the "code of honor," and yet he felt deeply touched, that that gentleman would condescend to make a fellow like Hickman, so much an equal, as to act as his second; and after revolving the matter in his mind, he came to the conclusion, that it evinced, on the part of Mr. Moreton, a want of that proper appreciation for himself, that he felt he was entitled to, and there was, consequently, a blow struck to his self-esteem, which he deeply felt.

When, therefore, he read the challenge borne by Col. Lee, he felt the blood rushing to his head, and then came over him the defiant spirit of an injured man at bay. Remembering that he had already appealed to Mr. Moreton's friendship in vain, the truth flashed upon him, that he was surrounded with toils, that would require, to escape from with self-respect, the most consummate address; he, therefore, after a few moments' hesitation, informed Col. Lee, that at the earliest possible moment, through the hands of a friend, he would be honored with an answer, whereupon the two gentlemen courteously bade each other adieu, and separated.

Mildmay rode toward his home, with a struggle in his mind that gave him the first intense misery he had ever felt in his life. By a train of circumstances over which he had no control, and by the connivance of persons the least expected, he found himself in one of the most difficult positions in which a man of feeling and high sense of self-respect could be placed. He had always denounced duelling; his early teachings, and his own religious sentiments, condemned the practice; yet, as he rode along, his ears would burn, and his face flush, at the thought of hav-

ing Col. Lee, Mr. Moreton, and "the world!" apply to him an opprobrious epithet.

Mildmay was in the garden of temptation,—the bitter cup was at his lips; his moral principles were now to be tested: how ignorant was he up to that moment of his real nature. Mr. Moreton would have made friends with Mildmay; his calm judgment and better feelings dictated that he should, but he was so brave, that he was *afraid* of Col. Lee's censure. Mildmay cared as little for the good or bad opinion of the people in and about Beechland, as perfectly independent circumstances, superior education, and want of sympathy, could make one; yet, strange as it may seem, he cowered under the idea of having these same people, for whom he really felt so little respect, condemn him, for doing what he knew to be right,—to be just,—to be Christian,—refuse to take part in a duel; he therefore wavered, and finally placed his peace of mind, and his life, out of his keeping,—surrendered to a bloody Moloch, the noble attribute of self-apprecience, and for the time, trembled more from the fear of corrupt man, than he did at the just anger of his God.

After a long and most painful conversation with Gen. Bledsoe, Mildmay, as he was about retiring, remarked, "See Mr. Moreton, do every thing proper to have this matter, as it should be, amicably arranged; if it cannot be, I leave all future arrangements in your hands."

Never did a more genial day dawn upon the luxuriant fields of the South than was ushered in on the morning appointed for the duel. Through the live-long night, a gentle sea-breeze had graciously cooled the atmosphere, as

if moved by the fanning wings of some protecting angel. Mildmay rose just at the dawn of day, possessed with but one idea, and that was, how he could best account to Annie for his early morning ride. Supposing that he had escaped from his room unobserved by her watchful eyes, he had already prepared himself for departure; and had just taken his musket from its hangings, when her light footsteps were heard upon the stairs.

Mildmay at the sound pressed the deadly weapon against his heart, and casting his eyes upward, muttered, "God of Heaven! have mercy on me!" and then assuming his usually quiet expression, he stepped quickly but with painful feelings of embarrassment into the hall.

Annie that morning looked even more than usually charming. Her flowing robe was but negligently closed at the throat, which displayed her beautiful neck to its greatest advantage; her smile was most enchanting,—her step free,—and she appeared the very personification of genial goodness and wifely beauty.

"Upon my word," said she, with a merry laugh, as her eyes met Mildmay's,—"upon my word, Graham, I shall begin to be jealous of the goddess Diana, if you thus *steal* away to her retreats."

Graham breathed more freely, as he found Annie had suggested a reason for his conduct, and quickly replied: "You know that the deer are early risers, Annie, and if caught at all, it must be while the dew is on the ground."

"Perhaps so," said the young wife, "perhaps so; but do you know, Graham," placing her arm upon his shoul-

der, as they walked towards the lawn, "that I could not have the heart to shoot any thing; "even the looks of that poor buck you brought home the other day, made me feel sad,—its glazed and liquid eyes haunt me even now."

It seemed to Graham that iron hooks had a hold upon his heart, tearing it asunder, and then crushing it with the weight; but he maintained himself, and replied:

"There is enough of the savage life in us, Annie, in spite of our civilization, to make the sports of the field sometimes agreeable; I think, perhaps, a dash of the wild man forms a useful alloy for even the noblest natures."

"What you prove by example," said Annie, "leaves no room for argument; but you will come back soon, will you not?" and as the tender-hearted woman, all innocent of the fearful precipice upon which she was standing, asked this question, she looked at Mildmay a world of unutterable love.

"I will, Annie," said he, determined to fall dead at his wife's feet before he would betray himself, or awaken by any extraordinary emotion on his part her sensibilities to the awful ordeal through which she, in his person, was about to pass.

"And so do," said Annie, stepping aside and gathering a white half-blown rose; and returning to Mildmay, she took a pin from her dress, and fastened the bud to one of the button-holes of his coat,—"And so do," she repeated, standing back, as if to take in the effect of the flower; "and come home soon, for I shall wait breakfast for you, and Clemmy and I will see what good thing we can invent to appease that hunter's appetite I know you

will find in the woods;" and kissing Mildmay, she stood transfixed as long as he remained in sight.

Graham looked back but once,—waved his hand, and turning away, pressed it against his forehead, and stared wildly into the heavens. Who, but the Infinite, could fathom his thoughts!—who, save the Creator, comprehend the awful struggle in his mind between his moral feelings and the participation of crime, which would violate them all. How there came rushing upon him the precepts of peace, that had so often been enforced and illustrated in his early education; how the form of his Saviour rose in his view, preaching peace and good-will to all mankind; how Annie's misery, if he fell: all these things rushed through his brain and heart, yet the spell of the demon of the duello was upon him; the heathen Ajax defied but the lightning,—a Christian now invoked the wrath of Almighty God!

As Mildmay rode slowly down the road, his faithful body-servant followed in the rear; and tired of the silence, he took advantage of a favorable opportunity, and said, "Master, I seed a buck in de old field yesterday; I think you'd better turn in de lower bars, and we can pass right by his tracks in comin up where de hands are at work."

"I'm not after bucks this morning, nor am I going to the field," replied Mildmay, relieved perhaps to hear a voice of sympathy; and then turning suddenly to the boy, who had come nearly alongside, he inquired, "Did you ever see a duel?"

"No, master," replied Governor, his eyes popping out

of his head, as if the very suggestion of such a thing had swelled his brain.

"You will probably see one this morning," returned Mildmay, with solemnity; "and I charge you, as you value your life, never to speak of it at the Heritage until I tell you."

"Yes, master," echoed Governor, the very picture of perturbation:—

"Master, who's going to fou't?" inquired Governor, his curiosity finally overcoming his other emotions.

"You will learn in due time," returned Mildmay; and in another instant, he caught the sight of Gen. Bledsoe, who, with one or two friends, were leaping their horses over the partially let-down fence, showing that they had reached the place by coming across the fields.

Graham saluted Gen. Bledsoe and his friends with the carelessness, and yet the studied courtesy, of every-day meetings; and then riding up to the general, he grasped him firmly by the hand, and by consent the two rode ahead, and side by side.

"You are blessed with a fine morning, Mildmay," said the general, cheerfully; "all yesterday it looked like rain; and I was very glad to see it come off clear in the west, and give promise of this splendid day. And now," said the general, taking out his watch, "it is within a few minutes of the time of meeting,—did you practise, Mildmay, that hint I gave you about turning your body, without moving your feet?"

"I did not," returned Mildmay, in an emphatic manner.

"But you should have done it," said Gen. Bledsoe, naturally assuming the responsible position of second, and therefore for the time speaking with more than usual freedom. "You should have done it; it was an easy movement, and has saved life."

"To tell you the truth, general, I did go out a day or two since, and, according to your direction, I placed the heel of my right foot in the hollow of the left, and went through the pantomime of firing over my left shoulder at an imaginary human being in my rear."

"And what success did you have?" inquired the general, with animation.

"Why," answered Mildmay, "I came home ignorant of what success I might have had by practice."

A cloud passed over Gen. Bledsoe's face; he seemed to be angry, mortified, and filled with pity, by turns. Mildmay noticed it, and for the first and only time on that memorable day, did his eyes flash malignant fire; but he rode on in silence.

Mr. Moreton's friends—and there were several who took a deep and actively expressed interest in "the affair" —together with Col. Lee, had staid at Mr. Moreton's house the night before the duel. Previous to retiring, the arrangements were made for the following morning; and it was agreed that the party should rise early, and after a cup of coffee proceed at once to the ground, and there take a substantial breakfast, in picnic fashion,—Col. Lee suggesting, "that the display would have a fine moral effect upon the opposing party; and that there was nothing so well calculated

to shake a man's courage as to find his opponent early in the field."

These things were freely talked over in the evening, as the gentlemen smoked their cigars on the gallery, after the children and Aunt Margaret had retired.

Mrs. Moreton had been from the beginning perfectly conversant with the progress of the difficulty. At first she acted as a peacemaker, although she said but little; after a while, she commenced sympathizing with the sentiments of her husband and his friends, and very soon showed even more excitement on the subject than Mr. Moreton himself.

Danger to those she loved never entered her mind. The contemplated duel, therefore, from her early education, had no terrors, because she had wrought herself up to the notion, that it could amount to nothing more than a triumph for her husband; but how it was to be accomplished had never troubled her thoughts.

Just before the party separated for the night, Mrs. Moreton, who had silently for a long while listened to the general remarks, asked:

"You think, then, Col. Lee, that Mr. Mildmay will not fight?"

"Most decidedly," said the colonel, with a wave of the hand; "most decidedly," echoed the younger gentlemen, looking triumphantly at Mrs. Moreton.

"Madam," continued the colonel, "if Mr. Mildmay had any courage at all, it has been destroyed by those Yankees, who unfortunately had charge of his education."

"There cannot be a doubt of that," said a young gentleman, named Beauchamp; "he seems so afraid of a

fight, that he has made up a half-dozen difficulties to my knowledge. Look how he interfered to save Toadvine from lynching, although the fellow had killed one of his best niggers; and, besides that, Mildmay said he was willing to trust to the law for redress. In my opinion," continued Beauchamp, with energy, "any man that will refer to the law to get satisfaction for a personal wrong, is a coward."

"Not always," said Mr. Moreton, thoughtfully, roused by the sound of the offensive word used by Beauchamp; "not always, but it is difficult to overcome early education."

"And you think, Colonel Lee, that Mr. Mildmay will make an apology on the ground, do you?" asked Mrs. Moreton, drawing her shawl closely round her shoulders, as she was preparing to leave.

"I most certainly do," replied the colonel, rising with the other gentlemen to bid the lady good night; and he continued, in a playful way, "We shall not be hard upon Mildmay; if he don't beg off too much, we will dismiss him with very little ceremony, and leave him to the degradation of his own thoughts."

Mrs. Moreton cast a meaning look at her husband; her bright dark eye flashed with triumph, and with a stately tread, unusual to her manner, she waved her adieus—and leaning upon the arm of Mr. Moreton, disappeared from the presence of the gentlemen.

"I hope," said Beauchamp, with an oath, "I hope this Mildmay will stand fire, for I should hate to be disappointed, after all the trouble we have had.'

"If he will," said Col. Lee, walking pompously up and down, "if he will, there will be displayed the handsomest piece of finessing on the part of Moreton that ever distinguished an honorable meeting. Mildmay will undoubtedly shoot quick,—he has learnt the habit from deer-hunting; and by the arrangements of the duello, Moreton will thus draw his fire, and will have time to shoot Mildmay down at his leisure."

"Excellent!" cried Beauchamp, now full of enthusiasm; "excellent! and woe to the spectators that are in the way of Mildmay's bullet, for nobody will be safe except they stand close up to Moreton."

This sally was received with a suppressed laugh by all the party; and helping themselves liberally to the liquors that stood upon the sideboard, they, one by one, preceded by servants bearing candles, retired for the night to their rooms.

The following morning they met early in the dining-hall; the carriages, four in number, were at the door. Into one of the vehicles, under the more immediate charge of Beauchamp, was placed the "lunch," packed in champagne baskets. Every body was in surprising spirits; Mr. Moreton was himself more than usually agreeable,—Col. Lee never appeared to better advantage,—and Beauchamp said, "that this was the most agreeable excitement he ever had in his life."

As the carriages were about leaving, Mrs. Moreton made her appearance; there was a flush on her cheek, that made her naturally handsome face, almost radiant. She was exceedingly animated,—laughed at Beauchamp be-

cause he displayed so much interest about the breakfast basket; and as the carriages were about to move from the lawn, she stepped into the parlor, and brought out Mr. Moreton's rifle.

Walking to the carriage window, she handed it to her husband, exclaiming, "I would do more than that for the honor of my family." Mr. Moreton took the deadly weapon, gallantly kissed his wife's hand, and as the carriage dashed away, he continued to wave his tokens of adieu, which the lady returned, until a bend in the road caused the party to disappear from her sight.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CATASTROPHE.

The place selected for "the duel" was a neck of land, or rather "sand-bar," made by a creek, which at times overflowed the spot, and consequently it presented, at low water, a smooth, sandy surface as level as a floor. Opposite, rose the high bank of the stream, which circled round, holding the place of meeting, as it were, in its embrace. Tall and magnificent forest trees filled up the background, and some majestic specimens, in solitary grandeur, rose here and there, not only rich in their own unrivalled vegetation, but bearing heavenward, gigantic grape and flower-bearing vines. The birds sang merrily in the boughs, and the lowing kine grazed contentedly about—all in nature was harmony and peace.

Mr. Moreton and his friends were already upon the ground, when Mildmay and Gen. Bledsoe came in sight. The carriages in which they had come to the field, were ostentatiously drawn up near by. On the ground was snowy napery, upon which were the remains of a splendid repast; in fact, Moreton and his party were at the instant busily engaged in eating a hearty breakfast.

"This theatrical display of eating and drinking, at a time like this, is really disgusting!" said Gen. Bledsoe to Mildmay—"I am sure that this was not Mr. Moreton's suggestion; that gentleman has been badly advised."

In a moment more the viands were dispensed with, and Mr. Moreton's party shook hands with Gen. Bledsoe and Mildmay as cordially as if they had met at a picnic, instead of a hostile meeting. Mildmay went through this part of the ceremony with coldness; he was not yet perfect master of his feelings; dissembling was still difficult.

While considerable discussion was going on in subdued tones, between the seconds, Mildmay had, entirely alone, seated himself on a limb of a fallen tree; Mr. Moreton, on the contrary, was surrounded by a number of young men, who seemed to be very full of suppressed humor, for it seemed that, if it were proper, they would be entirely overcome with some excellent joke.

As Mildmay sat by himself, Governor, who had not been upon the ground more than a moment before he comprehended the purpose of the assembling, and who was filled with alarm, came near, and stood behind his master—an affecting statue of sorrowful interest, willing, could the sacrifice have been made, to give up his life to save his protector and friend.

In the course of a few moments Gen. Bledsoe walked up to Mildmay, and announced to him, that the preliminaries were arranged.

"General," said Mildmay, in reply, "your kindness to me on this occasion will ever be remembered with gratitude. The course I have adopted may be right or wrong,

still I must beg of you to bear with me, even if I demand more than is conceded on occasions of this kind." Gen. Bledsoe bit his lip. Mildmay continued: "I this morning make a sacrifice to public opinion, that, whatever may be the result, will be reflected upon by me, with sorrow, even to my grave. I therefore must ask of you, with most solemn interest, has every thing been done, compatible with honor, to peacefully arrange this difficulty between myself and Mr. Moreton?"

"Mr. Mildmay," said the general, with perceptible sternness, and some undisguised feeling of disdain in his face, "I have already assured you, over my own signature, that every proposition for peace has been almost rudely rejected; and I will add, that in respect to your feelings, I have almost compromised myself—and you, perhaps, by my active zeal to bring about a peaceful reconciliation."

"'Tis well!" returned Graham. "I have no more to say."

Mr. Moreton and Mildmay, after again ceremoniously shaking hands, at once took their appointed places, at twenty paces apart. There was, in many respects, a difference of appearance in the two combatants. Mr. Moreton had the air of a perfect gentleman, in the maturity of life; the slight tinge of gray that was discovered in his hair, when illuminated in the sunshine, gave interest to his face. He was perfectly self-possessed and affable. His whole expression denoted a person of high education, who was about to perform an important, but necessary act.

Mildmay, on the contrary, had evidently not yet reached

perfect maturity. His face was noble, and full of deep, abiding, solemn thought; it was painfully interesting, to see so much responsibility marked upon so young a brow. As he rose to his full height, he was certainly as perfect a specimen of manly beauty, as was ever seen.

Gen. Bledsoe, who, from the moment when he first saw Mildmay, had conceived a high idea of his qualities in every respect; when he came upon the ground, became so solicitous that Mildmay should sustain himself by the most approved bearing, that he unconsciously became affected with the sentiments of Mr. Moreton's friends, and feared that, possibly, Mildmay might at the critical moment, "compromise himself," and this feeling was somewhat confirmed by Mildmay's just reiterated desire to know "if every amicable proposition had been rejected?"

The principals were at their places, their weapons in their hands—when Gen. Bledsoe, his face full of deep sympathy, walked close up to Mildmay, and whispered in his ear:

"Mildmay, if there be *a doubt* in your mind, about your firmness on this occasion, if your conscientious scruples overcome your courage, let me take your place. Remember that the same blood courses through our veins.—*Hetty Bledsoe should not be disgraced upon the field.*"

"Stand back!" said Mildmay, with impassioned energy. "Do *your duty*, my friend!" continued he, in a calmer tone, "I will not forget mine.

"God bless you for that!" said Bledsoe, the tear struggling in his eye. "Now Mildmay, my boy!" added he, with vivacity, "tear that flower from your breast; it

is a better mark, against your dark dress, than ever was a 'bull's eye' on a target."

Mildmay looked down, and there, in all its innocent loveliness, was Annie's last tribute of affection, still fresh in the morning dews; the young husband plucked it from its place, and thrusting it into his breast, so that it rested upon his heart, he turned to his second, and with a firm voice said:

"I am ready."

Col. Lee, who had the ordering of the preliminaries, the moment he heard Mildmay's remark, with professional solemnity asked:

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"We are ready!" was mutually answered.

"Then, gentlemen," said Col. Lee, with a loud voice, "upon my repeating again the question, 'Are you ready,' you are to answer 'Yes.' I shall then say, fire, one—two—three."

At this instant, Mildmay, who was standing with his musket resting in the hollow of his left arm, to the astonishment of all present, dropped the butt upon the ground and said:

"Col. Lee, I desire some information."

Gen. Bledsoe, who was now of course compelled to be a silent spectator, felt a sickness come over him, when Mildmay appeared thus so unnecessarily to interrupt the proceedings, while a look of sarcastic significance passed between Moreton's friends, Beauchamp whispering, "Mildmay's going to faint."

"What is it, sir?" said Col, Lee, impatiently, at the same time, turning to the questioner.

"Do I understand aright, Col. Lee," said Mildmay, with an affectedly slow emphasis, "that I can fire at any time between the counts of 'one—two—three.'"

"You can, sir!" answered Col. Lee, waving his hand with authority.

Upon hearing which, Mildmay very slowly stooped down, and pinching up some dry dust between the thumb and fore-finger of his right hand,—without speaking, signified that he understood the arrangement, and instantly assumed his proper position.

Gen. Bledsoe, whose confidence in Mildmay's firmness had been so terribly shaken, by what appeared to be his ill-opportuned interruption; instantly caught the deep intent of Mildmay's question, and the reason of his apparent desire to fortify his finger against the possibility of slipping on the trigger; it flashed upon him, like lightning, that it was all to derange Moreton's calculations about Mildmay's making a quick fire, and Gen. Bledsoe, whose heart, a moment before, was near collapsing with fear; with a thrill of admiration, could now with difficulty restrain himself from falling on Mildmay's neck, and bursting into tears.

Both Moreton and Mildmay now seemed conscious that the instant of action had arrived, for they simultaneously and courteously raised their weapons, as if "presenting arms." Col. Lee again, in a solemn voice asked:

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

The combatants simultaneously answered, "We are!" Then said Col. Lee:

"Gentlemen,—FIRE—*one*—"

The numeral had hardly escaped the lips of Lee, before the crashing sound of Mildmay's musket echoed far and wide, and Moreton, with his weapon undischarged, sprang perpendicularly in the air, and then fell lumbering to the earth; for an instant, his body trembled like an aspen leaf; he essayed to raise himself, and amid gurgling sounds, could be faintly distinguished the words, "My wife—my children!" and then, with a long-drawn sigh, he fell back—a corpse.

Mildmay, still standing in his place, gazed sadly at the group now kneeling about the lifeless form of the once splendid Mr. Moreton; and then, handing his weapon to Governor, who could scarce conceal his exultation at the result, he mechanically moved toward his horse.

But ere he reached his place of destination, Gen. Bledsoe, who had instinctively rushed toward the dying man, now turned to Mildmay; and seizing him by the hand, he shook it convulsively, and looking him affectionately in the face, said:

Mildmay, thank God *you* are safe, and you have, this day, added lustre to the bearing of a gentleman."

Col. Lee next came forward, and with a most courtly salute, he said: "Mr. Mildmay, I have had the extreme pleasure of acting as 'a friend,' on many similar occasions, and in none, that I can remember, or that I have heard of, have the strict rules of honor been more faithfully preserved; your conduct to-day is above all praise."

Mildmay listened to these strangely sounding congratulations, as if he were in a dream, but rallying his thoughts,

he bade all present a general adieu; mounted his horse, and closely followed by Governor, slowly rode away.

"What a trump he is!" said Beauchamp, the moment Mildmay was out of hearing. "What a trump! he has, this morning, established himself in society; every honor and office is henceforth open to him. I wonder whether he will decide to go to Congress?"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WIDOW AND ORPHANS.

The moment that Mr. Moreton left his house with the gay party, Aunt Margaret went into her room, and throwing herself on her knees, in an intense agony of prayer, she called on her Heavenly Father to enlighten the heart of her brother and his friends, and save the effusion of blood. "But," she concluded, "if the wrath of offended Heaven is upon us for our many sins, prepare our hearts for the awful responsibilities that await us." While thus pouring out her very soul for divine grace, Toots, who had been much amused by the attention of the gentlemen, and the bustle preceding her father's departure, missing Aunt Margaret, promptly proceeded to her room, and bursting in the door, she saw her dear relative, who was still in the attitude of prayer, in tears.

"Why, what's matter?" asked Toots, throwing her little arms around Aunt Margaret's neck; "what's you cry for? won't Jemima weed the flower-beds?"

"Oh, nothing, my dear, dear child!" said Aunt Mar-

garet pressing her little niece to her bosom; "nothing, my sweet one, Jemima did weed the flower-beds."

"I am glad of it," said Toots, with comical pomposity; and unconsciously imitating her father's manner—"I am glad of it; I'd like misef to see any one that didn't mind what Aunty says."

The smile of affection that passed over Aunt Margaret's face, formed curious channels for a flood of tears; and again kissing Toots, and heaving a deep sigh, she said:

"Run down stairs, my little one, and see if dear papa has come."

Away went Toots, her little feet pattering like hail upon the wax-polished floor; and rushing to the gallery, she saw her mother walking nervously up and down its ample length.

Now the sight of her mother thus spiritedly walking, astonished Toots, and joined with the scene just enacted by her aunt, the child appeared to comprehend that something unusual had occurred; and catching hold of her mother's dress, she said:

"Muddy, Aunt Margaret's crying up stairs—who's hurt her, muddy?"

Mrs. Moreton rolled her large and brilliant eyes down upon Toots, as if the child had suddenly stung her in the heart; and drawing her arms across her bosom, while two scalding tears fell upon the floor, she said:

"Call Fanny, child, and go and see the chickens fed; ah, that's a dear."

Toots bounced around, and in another minute was in the kitchen, ordering the servant to the appointed task, and

rattling on with directions, it appeared, as if her tongue would never be still.

Mrs. Moreton continued to pace the gallery; the time which her husband said he would be absent had already passed, and there was a faint sensation—an unaccountable feeling about her heart: "Who hurt Aunt Margaret?—what did the child mean?" these questions she repeated to herself, as a sense of danger, like a dark cloud, commenced settling around her.

"Oh, I am sure nothing serious has happened to Moreton," she soliloquized; "did not Colonel Lee tell me that Mildmay 'wouldn't fight,' and did not all my husband's friends assure me that there was no danger? I am sure it was only a harmless pastime," and the poor lady's face turned alarmingly pale.

While in this frame of mind, the carriage, containing Mr. Moreton's body, and those accompanying it, were seen winding their way slowly through the forest. The wife was now all alarm. She struggled, as if smothering for want of air. Placing her delicate hand over her eyes, she looked at the approaching procession as if she would see through the solid sides of the vehicles.

"My God! my God!" she exclaimed, now nearly frantic; "I know that something must have happened. Moreton would never come home so slowly, if he were not wounded:" and rushing into the house, she fairly screamed, "Aunt Margaret, do come here!"—and exhausted with emotion, she sank almost lifeless in a chair.

The beloved form of Aunt Margaret was instantly at the head of the stairs; she descended with more

than usual calmness: her eyes were still red with weeping,—her face was pale, but firm; she seemed armed with a superhuman strength, as if prepared to do her duty, whatever it might be.

"What is the matter, dear Clotilde?" said Aunt Margaret, standing over the reclining form of Mrs. Moreton.

"Matter!" echoed the lady, with fierce animation; "matter! Has not Moreton been hurt?—did you ever know his carriage to approach the house at that snail's pace?" and she pointed with her finger to the cortège, that was now entirely visible through the wide-opened door.

"Be calm, dear sister! I hope that all is well!" and Aunt Margaret herself became a statue of interest, as she watched the carriages approach.

In a moment more, they drew up in front of the lawn, and Col. Lee, with a slow and dignified tread, opened the front gate, and came toward the house.

Mrs. Moreton stared at his approaching figure until no longer able to contain herself; she then leaped from Aunt Margaret, and absolutely flew across the lawn to meet Col. Lee.

"He's only wounded?" said she, her hands raised in an imploring attitude.

"Wounded!" echoed the colonel, for an instant overcome by the unexpected appearance of Mrs. Moreton.

"I am sorry to say," replied the colonel—"I am sorry to say, madam, that Mr. Moreton is wounded and—"

But before the "accomplished second" could finish his explanation, the wife, in a perfect frenzy, rushed past him,

and reached the gate, just as her husband's body had been drawn clear of the carriage, and was extended at full length in the arms of its bearers.

Now, so intent were the parties in their occupation of carrying the dead, that they did not perceive Mrs. Moreton's intrusion, and she, having a full and undisturbed glance of her husband's face, as the head rolled from side to side in the stepping movement of being borne along, she comprehended in an instant the full extent of her loss; and with one piercing shriek, she threw herself upon the lifeless body.

For a moment she gazed upon the expressionless face, and stared wildly at those about her. "Gentlemen," she said, pushing her luxuriant hair from her forehead—"gentlemen, this is not reality—this is all a horrid dream! It cannot be!—it cannot be!" and she laid her delicate hand upon the silent heart of the dead before her.

For an instant her mind seemed to wander, and then the startling truth came like a mighty avalanche upon her soul; and throwing herself back, she raised her hand to heaven, and screamed, "God Almighty! have mercy—have mercy!" and again prostrating herself upon the body of Mr. Moreton, she moaned like a child, and then exclaimed, "Have mercy, oh God! have mercy!—this cannot —shall not be!"

Col. Lee was instantly at the lady's side, and with a manner that would have done honor to him if he had been offering to assist a lady to her carriage, he said:

"Mrs. Moreton, permit me to hand you into the house?"

"Touch me not!" said the lady, springing to her feet, and drawing herself up, as if about to be stung by an adder, and pointing her finger scornfully in his face; "touch me not, I say, you slimy and vile hypocrite! How dare you, sir," she continued, her eyes fairly flashing lurid fire—"how dare you, sir, offer to assist me, whom you have this day robbed of a husband? Go, sir, from my presence, or the servants shall chastise your impudence—shall lash you to your grave! Go!" she hysterically sighed, with a softened voice—"go, and at once, for murderers are ye all! Go! ere the blight of Heaven, the sorrows of orphan children, and the sighs of a heart-broken wife, drive you like myself—mad—mad—mad!"

Then breaking into merry peals of laughter, she moaned: "He's coming! I see him now, and his arms are open to meet me! 'Twas a cruel jest, gentlemen, to trifle thus with my fears! Oh, God! he's pale—there's blood upon him!" and again would Mrs. Moreton have clasped to her bosom the inanimate form before her, when a fearful darkness overspread her face, and in another moment she was literally carried raving into the house.

At the door stood the children, all pale and sorrow-stricken, and curious to know what was the meaning of the fearful scenes enacted before them; comprehending at length something of their misfortune, they mingled their lamentations with the sobs of the mother, that now could be heard from an adjoining room.

Amid this distress, Aunt Margaret moved about with all the dignity and mercy of an angel; she comforted one, and then another,—directed the distracted servants, and

tried to soothe the violent paroxysms of sorrow, that constantly passed in awful throes through the heart of the fearfully stricken Mrs. Moreton.

In the mean time, the inanimate form of the once fond father was disposed of in the drawing-room; the shutters were closed, and there settled upon every thing that mysterious impress so common to the vicinage of the dead.

Col. Lee, and the gentlemen with him, now clustered around each other in the gallery hall, haggard—absolutely paralyzed with terror; Col. Lee alone maintained any presence of mind, and remarked, with a forced composure, which he did not feel:

"You see, gentlemen, this was a very unfortunate affair—very! Mrs. Moreton will, however, recover in a day or two. The fact is, that Mildmay deceived us by his looks; he was evidently much misrepresented: we had better see Mrs. Marbury (Aunt Margaret), and make arrangements for calling in a physician, and such friends as the family may desire."

A servant was sent, by the gentlemen, for Aunt Margaret, and when she made her appearance, she had just succeeded in getting Mrs. Moreton into a troubled sleep, and left her in the charge of a faithful domestic.

It was arranged that some of the female members of a neighboring family, should be at once sent for; the messenger for a physician had already been dispatched.

After a hurried conversation, carried on in suppressed whispers, Aunt Margaret satisfied Col. Lee, that his presence was no longer necessary, and begged him to leave, and also with him, his friends.

The gentlemen felt exceedingly embarrassed; to go away without doing something to alleviate the misery before them, seemed mortifying indeed, and yet they were powerless to afford consolation.

While Aunt Margaret stood in the door, evidently intending to close it at the moment the gentlemen disappeared, there came from Mrs. Moreton's room a continued repetition of fearful shrieks and screams, and in another instant, the lady herself, pale as death, rushed upon the gallery, holding at arm's length, a letter. Without seeming to notice any one, she strode a few paces, and in a plaintive voice, said:

"Mildmay begged for peace, God help him!—Mildmay begged for peace,—here's his very words!" and she pressed the letter to her eyes, as if still unconscious of the full meaning of its contents.

The gentlemen were now completely embarrassed. Mrs. Moreton was in a loose dress, and her luxuriant hair streamed over her shoulders. Delicacy bade them precipitately retreat, still they remained as if fascinated to the spot.

Aunt Margaret, the moment she recovered her self-possession, went to Mrs. Moreton, and placing her hand upon that lady's shoulder, said:

"Sister, be calm! let's into the house."

"Calm! calm!" echoed Mrs. Moreton, dwelling upon the word, until it thrilled all who heard it, with horror.

"Do you bid me be calm?—*me*, Aunt Margaret, who have been robbed of the best of husbands, and that too, by villains, and fiends, who conspired against his life, and

who have accomplished, by the hands of another, what they dared not have done themselves?"

"Sister, dear sister!" said Aunt Margaret, clasping the frantic lady round the neck.

At this moment the dark lustrous eyes of Mrs. Moreton, always so beautiful, but now, brilliant with insanity, rested upon Col. Lee and his followers, who were cowering in trembling groups near her; with gigantic strength she tore herself away from all restraint, and advancing toward Col. Lee and his associates,—she exclaimed:

"Cowards are ye all, vile cowards! Murderers of a man you called your friend—you have partaken of his hospitality, and plotted his death under his own roof,—look at your work—look at me!" and Mrs. Moreton raised herself up like a queen of the tragic muse. "Look at those fatherless children,—may the blood of the dead be upon your craven souls! You told me, as you told *him*, that Mildmay would not fight—you lied—upon your souls, you knew you lied!"

"For mercy's sake, dear sister! for mercy's sake desist!" said Aunt Margaret, throwing her arms around Mrs. Moreton's neck, and for the first time that fearful morning, that faithful friend burst into tears.

Again Mrs. Moreton tore herself away, and still intent upon pouring out her feelings, where for the moment they centred, she waved her hand at Col. Lee, and bade him "begone," and then continued, with even more vehemence than ever, "leave this house; it is polluted by your presence. Go! and may the execrations of all good and brave men, pursue you; may the scalding tears you have

seen shed to-day, burn your craven hearts! may all mothers and wives spurn and despise you." And Mrs. Moreton, struggling for a moment as one smothering for want of air, swooned, and fell into Aunt Margaret's arms.

Col. Lee and his friends heard all, like men entranced, and they trembled and blanched, as if moved about by an earthquake, but when the terms "cravens—murderers—cowards," were hurled in their faces, the crimson blood of shame seemed ready to break through their cheeks and foreheads, and their ears burned as if they were on fire.

"Go, I beseech you, gentlemen!" said Aunt Margaret, looking toward the lawn, as she assisted in supporting the insensible form of her widowed sister. "Go! and may God forgive you for your participation in this day's sad work."

The calm voice of Aunt Margaret broke the charm, and they moved away, like condemned culprits, from before the desolation they themselves had made. For the moment, the mark of Cain was on their brows, the gnawing of terrible remorse was at their hearts, and for the moment, they even envied the calmness and the insensibility, that rested upon the form of the dead.

The full extent of the labors of love performed by Aunt Margaret, that day, is recorded in heaven. Never before, perhaps, had so kind a heart been so severely taxed; every feeling had been wrung to its utmost sensibility, and on the night of that awful day, when nature had stifled the sobs of orphaned children to sleep, when Mrs. Moreton, her face distorted by the conflicts of her mind, sunk from physical exhaustion into temporary quiet, then, and not

until then, did Aunt Margaret steal from the room, to look at the cold remains of her only, her most affectionate brother; and removing the napkin that covered that once loved face, she gazed steadily awhile, a tear or two came to her relief, and lifting up her eyes, she thanked Heaven, that amidst all the suffering around her, she could see one placid expression, even if it were caused by that sleep, which, until the resurrection morn, knows no waking.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PENALTY.

On reaching home, Mildmay threw the bridle rein upon his horse's neck, and entered the lawn; Ponce de Leon had, as usual, watched his coming from a distance, and with one of his vast leaps, was about fawning upon his master, when he discovered something in Mildmay's eye, that made him shrink back, and whine with terror—on Mildmay strode, as if some fiend were in pursuit, and treading heavily as he walked into the house, he placed his gun upon its accustomed hooks, and presented himself in the breakfast room.

At the table sat Annie, evidently awaiting his coming, but, as she looked up and saw Graham, she uttered an exclamation of surprise, and then seemed petrified into a statue of alarm.

"I thought you knew *my* walk!" said he, with undisguised sarcasm, gloomily taking his seat.

Annie still stared, her face working with strange and terrible emotion, while her eyes, to herself, seemed untrue in their vision, and bowing her head, she sighed—

'I do know your walk, Graham!" and then looking up with increasing alarm, she continued, "but that was not your step I just now heard."

"It *was I!*" answered Graham, with a sneer, and then he literally snarled through his teeth, "the ears of love grow dull by time."

"Graham!" exclaimed Annie, and turning deadly pale, and rising straight up from her seat, she fell toward him, as stiff and cold as if she had been marble.

Graham caught the insensible form of his wife, and held it as firmly, and remorselessly as if it were really an inanimate thing. Glaring down upon the closed eyes and pale face of the beautiful and innocent Annie, he tried to recollect what was his relation to the being he held in his arms; he had, for the moment, no distinct idea of the relation of wife; wandering, to him an age, in the undefined regions of horrid uncertainty, he first remembered his early associations in Malden; and by degrees, and slow and painful progress, he traced his acquaintance with Annie, through courtship and marriage—and carefully connecting the incidents, the truth finally dawned upon him, who she really was; and for the relief of his breaking heart, scalding tears ran streaming from his eyes.

His mind once enlightened, he bore Annie to a couch, and the intense solicitude he felt lest the vital spark had fled, was a temporary relief from the tenfold more terrible burden that crushed his heart.

The moment that she was left to herself, the currents of life slowly returned to their channels; she sighed and moaned as one waking from a deep and almost fatal sleep;

and at last, with her eyes still closed, she reached out her hands, and ejaculated:

"Mother, where's Graham?"

"Here I am," he answered, leaning over her prostrate form.

"And is this truly my Graham?" said the stricken wife, her face still full of doubt.

"Annie," said Mildmay, supporting her in his arms, "since we last parted, I have passed through dangers which you cannot comprehend; I have been tempted by the evil one, and have fallen a victim. I have those about me who have sought to destroy not only my life, but my honor;" and here Mildmay became too choked for utterance.

"Passed through dangers!" murmured Annie, with increasing strength and interest. "Tell me, what is this fatal secret!—why this change! Do you not love me, Graham? do you not know Annie?—have you forgotten your wife?"

"Annie," said Graham, his face resuming some of its natural expression,—"Annie, a cloud has settled upon us; the peace of our once happy home is destroyed for ever! my life is now valueless! I have shed human blood, and the never-dying worm of remorse is eating at my heart."

Annie now in an instant comprehended all, still the particulars were vague and undefined. There passed through her mind a thousand things before unnoticed, which, when considered together, led her to the correct result; and throwing her arms about Mildmay's neck, she wept and sobbed like a child.

It was while Annie was thus pouring out her feelings upon Mildmay's breast, that her form seemed again to melt in unity with his own; the consciousness of the possession of her unwavering love returned to him as a dim star glimmering in a dark and stormy sky,—and as she looked up in his face, he pressed one long and earnest kiss of redemption upon her brow.

Time wore heavily on. Two persons inhabited that once pleasant home, who appeared careworn, despondent—prematurely old. There were times of momentary peace,—rays of sunshine occasionally broke forth, but the clouds would always overpower in the struggle, and leave a deeper gloom.

Neither Annie nor Graham ever alluded to the cause of all this sorrow. The young wife redoubled her efforts to render her husband's home cheerful, but she found in her despair that all her efforts affected only his physical comfort,—his mind she could not reach.

The master and mistress of Heritage Place endeavored to resume, at least outwardly, their accustomed manner of life. Both felt that they were now more than ever necessary for each other's existence—the word "happiness" they dared not utter. Occasionally a calm would come over their household, but some unpleasant reminiscence connected with the duel would be rudely thrust upon them, and their bark of life would suddenly ground upon the sands of desolate recollections.

The duel became a matter of newspaper notoriety; "public opinion," which would have been foremost in denouncing Mildmay if he had obeyed the reasonings of his

own conscience, and "refused to fight," was now poured out in news-paragraphical sympathy for the deceased,—for the "fatherless children,"—for the "widowed and afflicted mother:" and as these statements and reflections spread, they became exaggerated, and rolled back from the distance in a dark cloud of condemnation on duelling, and on the head of "the monster Graham Mildmay," who was finally represented as "a desperado of the Southwest, seeking by every means in his power, to imbrue his hands in human blood."

It was these things that continually gave activity to the misery that rested upon the inmates of Heritage Place, and destroyed in the minds of Graham and Annie the little consolation that would have arisen in the thought that their sorrows were confined to their own domestic circle, and sanctified by the privacy of their own hearts. Instead of this, the idea haunted their sensitive spirits that a million eyes of the thoughtless public were staring upon them from the surrounding world, and that they were never again to be free from observation—*never again to be alone.*

The enervating influences of a Southern climate, meanwhile, had their effect upon Annie. At the very time of the occurrence of the sad incidents that so severely wounded her spirit, she was in the critical time of acclimation, and consequently, least capable, so far as her physical health was concerned, to bear so great a shock. Her intense desire to soothe Graham under his misfortunes rendered her blind to her own declining strength; and when Graham became conscious that she was, and had been,

perhaps, a long time sinking under her weight of sorrow, a new cause of alarm thrilled his soul.

The subject once broached by Graham, the language of sympathy broke Annie's silence regarding herself, and she acknowledged that she felt that she had not long to live; yet there was no perceptible, or defined sickness. Graham now in turn became the sympathizing nurse, and found absolute relief in his anxiety and attentions to Annie, from the more terrible feelings of remorse that still haunted his heart.

"Time," he would say, taking Annie's attenuated hand in his own—"Time, my Annie, will assauge these regrets; we are young, and we will outlive the first blow of this terrible affliction that has come upon us: we will know how to enjoy the blessings of the future by the severe lesson we have had of the past. You shall help me, dear wife, to atone for my errors; if we cannot be very, very happy, we can at least enjoy peace."

Annie would smile,—would look full of hope, but if Graham could have been restored to that sensitiveness of love that possessed his heart in the "olden times," he would have perceived that Annie Hastings was quietly, but sweetly passing away; she felt it—knew it: her only consolation was, that she should breathe her last in Graham's arms, and blessing his affection, lead the way to Heaven. Still Annie pursued her simple occupations, and sometimes made even Graham's saddened face light up with a smile at her unusual interest in some trivial occupation, which showed, that she still remembered tastes and preferences which he had formerly expressed.

The desolation at Mrs. Moreton's was complete. The widowed mother had only momentary glimpses of reason, and then relapsed into moaning, idiotic insanity. She made the night air thick with her complaints, and demands for her husband; and kneeling down, she would call on Heaven to for ever crush the men, "who took Mr. Moreton away to execution!"

Eminent physicians came up from New Orleans, in hopes that their skill could do something to relieve Mrs. Moreton; and the result was, the temporary removal of the whole family to the city. As its youthful members, arrayed in deepest mourning, in charge of Aunt Margaret, passed through Beechland, tears were plentifully shed by eyes heretofore unused to such weakness. There they were, orphaned, deprived of their natural protectors, marching in long procession, the very impersonation of woe. Even the vivacious Toots had become a quiet child; her little spirit was subdued, and beyond insisting that every one should acknowledge that her younger sister (the baby) *was good*, she for the while but little resembled her former self.

One of the subordinate incidents connected with the duel, it perhaps should be mentioned, was that Col. Lee, in the reaction of public sentiment, came in for his share of denunciation; but, as usual, when it was too late to accomplish any good, in checking his vanity in arranging "points of honor." In the midst of what he considered a momentary decadence of his star, authentic information came to Beechland, that the "high-toned, chivalrous representative of one of the first families of Virginia, Col.

Lee," was the son of a once respectable tavern-keeper in the vicinity of Colesburg; and that all the knowledge he had of horses, or good society, was what he picked up as a stable-boy, or in listening to the conversations at the *table d'hôte*. This blow, with his other troubles, struck him down, and amid the jeers of the people generally, he sneaked off at night from Beechland, as Busteed remarked, "to turn up in Texas,—do over again the 'first family humbug,' and look down upon honest people on account of his aristocratic associations."

Mr. Morcton was buried near the public road in the graveyard at Beechland; it was contemplated to erect a splendid monument over his grave, and the site alluded to was selected by Col. Lee as the fittest place to display to the passers-by upon the "storied urn" the many virtues of the deceased. Soon after the funeral there came on one of those long and continuous rains, so common in the South, and the roads every where were almost impassable —they were so cut up by heavy loads. The negroes, with their jaded teams, in their usual desire to avoid the obstacles of the prescribed highway, made a short cut across one corner of the graveyard; and what was first done in the spirit of necessity, soon became a matter of course, and ox-wagons, emigrants, carriages, and foot-passengers pursued, unconscious of profanation, the new-made way.

But when the sun shone out again in brightness,— when the heretofore impassable road resumed its wonted hard and dusty firmness,—it was found, that the resting-

place of the once noble and generous-hearted Mr. Moreton, was *entirely obliterated from the face of the earth.*

Major Dixon finally carried out his cherished intention of retiring from active participation in his long pursued, and, to him, most profitable business. His trip to Colesburg was his last appearance in his professional capacity. On his return to New Orleans he sold out his depot, and retiring to a valuable tract of land he had long owned in the vicinity of Beechland, he brought together a large number of negroes that he had hired about the country, and, as if by magic, turned into a substantial planter; and, as was agreed by the best judges, owned the "handsomest force" that could be found in the whole South.

As Major Dixon gradually developed himself, his equivocal Georgian title of Major, warmed under the influence of popular favor, burst, like a well-perfected bud, into the full-blown luxuriance of "General;" and so quietly had it been done, that no one could remember when the transition took place.

"Alava"—for such was the name the General chose for his place—was distinguished for the rich furniture of the residence, as well as for its perfectly trained domestics. The arrival, from time to time, at Beechland, of costly mirrors, damask curtains, rich carpets, cushioned chairs,—all bearing the magical mark of "D," in their final disposition, gave to the reception-rooms an almost unknown splendor. Upon the walls were hung several fine engravings, prominently among which the proprietor of Alava placed "Mercy's Dream;" his own portrait, half-length, had also been painted, which represented the

General, sitting in a magnificent library, and holding a "Virgil" in his hand.

Parson Goshawk, as he now disliked to be called, soon after he married the widow Hartshorn, devoted the whole of his time to agricultural pursuits. He had unfortunately become affected by a bronchial complaint. His general health appeared excellent; he had an unfailing appetite, and nothing, however great the quantity, that went *down* his throat, hurt him: talking about cotton, negroes, or, *my* plantation, did not seem to irritate the epiglottis, but the moment he rose in the pulpit to preach, he said that he felt a wandering of mind,—a vacancy of thought,—a total want of interest in the subject matter before him,—that was truly alarming; and he was, therefore, obliged to leave off public ministrations altogether, and thus having leisure, he often visited, and became quite a favorite with his neighbor, Gen. Dixon, whose hospitality soon became proverbial.

Surrounded with friends, it was seldom indeed that the General partook of the solitary meal of a bachelor planter. The return of a birthday was made the occasion of a social gathering. The guests filled the splendid parlors, and in varied conversation beguiled the time preceding the announcement that the feast is prepared. Upon a sideboard was a rich display of cut-glass, a pitcher of ice-water, and several decanters of costly liquors and wines. Generally, a servant stood by to assist those who desired to refresh themselves; if not, the gentlemen, with and without ceremony, gratified their appetites.

On one of those pleasant sideboard gatherings, while

the gentlemen were trying their wits about the age and value of the costly wines and brandies before them, Mr. Goshawk started up with animation, and said: "Are you aware, gentlemen, that these lovely flowers, in which we are almost embowered, are absolutely the complimentary evidences of the esteem in which General Dixon is held by the ladies of my congregation?"

"Pshaw, Goshawk!" said Dixon, absolutely blushing to his eyes.

"Aha!" said Judge Burley; "this explains why that white 'lady banks' has been so very carefully disposed of on the centre-table,—reposing luxuriantly in a vase by itself: acknowledge the indictment, General;—that bud is from old Governor Starbuck's conservatory, now isn't it?" and the judge looked unusually knowing upon the company present.

"The fact is," stammered the General, still confused—"the fact is, the ladies have been very kind indeed, and I am deeply indebted to them."

"But you find *one thornless rose* among the number, that is especially worthy of an honored place," pursued the judge, still keeping up his mysterious expression.

"Don't be too severe on the General," said Goshawk, coming to his relief, "for you cannot imagine that Alava will always be without a mistress."

"A health to the future lady of Alava," cried Captain Mercer, moving towards the sideboard; "come, 'gents,' let's fill up." A simultaneous rush was made to the point designated, and the significant gurgling sounds of liquids and the musical tinkling of glasses ensued.

Preceded by a grateful rattling of silver spoons, and other preluding noises from an adjoining room, that so clearly indicate that the last artistic touches are being given to the carefully set table—the folding doors were opened, and the hospitable board, and its accessories presented to view.

Upon a side table were piled up hundreds of pieces of fine china, beside of which, were ascending from the *potage jullien*, and *bisque*, the most grateful odors.

The guests, by a profusion of servants, who moved with quietness and precision, were conducted to their assigned places at the sumptuous board, and with a graceful preliminary, they unfolded the fine napkins, on which rested the prism-hued crystal, and in their new form, seemed drifted snow, absolutely deceiving the imagination into a sense of giving a cooling influence to the genial atmosphere.

Thus were disposed, the recipients of the hospitality of the prosperous and honored Gen. Dixon, and with smiling faces, and grateful expectation, they beheld adown the long table, at stated intervals, glistening pyramids of cake, combined under the eye of innocence and beauty, from the charmed surfaces of which sprang, in wasteful profusion, sugar-coated "loves," and innocent lambkins enchained in rosy wreaths.

Still securing the attention of the eye were the varied preserved fruits of the Western Indies, lying in their juicy beds, as fresh as if just robbed from their spicy homes, while rich confections and preserves, in luxuriant wantonness, filled up the intervening spaces.

A choice bouquet of flowers, by their enamelled smiles,

designated the allotted place of each guest, while from the centre of all, towered a floral pyramid, in which struggled for glowing supremacy the choicest native and exotic flowers, making the very air redolent with the perfumes of the honey-suckle, the hyacinth, the orange and citron bud,—more beautiful than Ceres or Pomona ever offered to the Queen of Love; and amid all, there went up the appropriate incense of a blessing, from the appointed man of God.

CHAPTER XXXII.

* * * * *

NEVER was there a funeral attended by more sincere mourners, than accompanied the remains of Annie Mildmay to her last resting-place. Among the throng, there was scarcely one who could claim a personal acquaintance, yet Annie was remembered, as she had occasionally appeared at church, and all felt that her premature death was hastened by the sad events already recorded. From the moment that she bestowed her last look of affection upon her husband, and raised her last prayer that Heaven would bless him, Graham seemed to be as one stunned beyond recovery. Throughout all the affecting preliminaries, he passively obeyed the suggestions of Gen. Bledsoe, and submitted, without remark, to whatever was done by the kind-hearted ladies of the neighborhood, who volunteered their attentions by the bed of sickness, and in the chamber of death.

The last rites to the beautiful and good were performed in the morning. The grave was in a quiet spot, beneath a wide-spreading oak, whose immense limbs held

their delicate leafings, as if they would protect the little hillock from every rude intrusion. Even before the mourners had departed, the innocent birds were carolling in the tree-top, and from a distance, its vernal gloom seemed to promise sweet repose.

Graham sat hour after hour upon the now, to him, deserted gallery. His servants moved noiselessly about, and dared not disturb his hopeless sorrow. Toward the close of day, Governor (since the duel more than ever cherished for his faithful service) handed his master a large number of letters and papers, which were listlessly received, and then, unnoticed, cast aside. The sun that had for some moments been struggling upon the horizon, and in flickering gleams illuminated the landscape, now rapidly disappeared; and as there is no twilight in a Southern sky, the thick darkness of a starless night enshrouded the form of Graham Mildmay.

THE END.

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